

ON THE STUMP WITH DONALD TRUMP

Newsweek®

08.14.2015

**I WILL BE THE
GREATEST
JOBS PRESIDENT
THAT GOD EVER
CREATED**


**I LIKE
PEOPLE WHO
WEREN'T
CAPTURED**

**I LOVE
THE
MEXICAN
PEOPLE**

**NOBODY WOULD
BE TOUGHER
ON ISIS THAN
DONALD TRUMP.
NOBODY**

**EVERYBODY
LOVES ME!**



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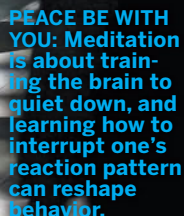
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by Bill Powell

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BIG SHOTS

FRANCE

No Country for Young Men

Coquelles, France—French officers try to stop migrants from reaching the Channel Tunnel, where they intend to illegally board trains heading to the United Kingdom, on July 29. Thousands from Africa and the Middle East have traveled on foot and hitchhiked across Europe to the French entrance of the tunnel, in the hope of finding safety and jobs in the relatively prosperous U.K. Facing growing concern within his Conservative Party over the crisis, British Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to send fencing and trained sniffer dogs to help French authorities who patrol the border.



PHILIPPE HUGUEN







FRANCE

Broken Wings

Réunion Island, France—A clean-up crew on July 29 removes a piece of debris from an unidentified aircraft that washed ashore on this tiny island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar. A piece of a wing and luggage suggested the wreckage may belong to Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which went missing last year with 239 people aboard. Traveling from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Beijing, the Boeing 777 veered off course and lost contact with air traffic control. A Malaysian government team has joined French authorities to look for additional wreckage.



RAYMOND WAE TION



ISRAEL

**Hate
Crime**

Jerusalem—Police detain an ultra-Orthodox Jewish man on July 30 after he stabbed six people with a knife during a gay pride parade. One of them, a 16-year-old girl, died of her wounds several days later. The attacker, Yishai Schlissel, had recently been released from prison after committing a similar crime in the same area 10 years ago. In the 2005 incident, Schlissel wounded three marchers and was convicted of attempted murder. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the attack “a despicable hate crime.”

EL SALVADOR

The Usual Suspects

San Salvador, El Salvador—Suspected members of the 18th Street gang are handcuffed together and presented to the media July 29. The five are accused of carrying out organized attacks against bus drivers who refused to go on a strike ordered by the gang. At least nine transportation workers have been killed, and thousands of commuters were left stranded in the Central American capital.

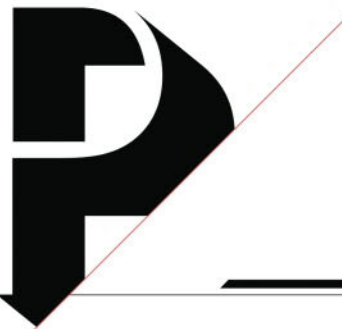
The 18th Street gang is engaged in a prolonged drug war with rival gang MS-13, which has turned the city into one of the world's murder capitals. June alone saw 677 murders. The gang is trying to use the traffic standstill to put pressure on the government, which has said it will not negotiate with criminals.



JOSE CABEZAS







P A G E O N E

TURKEY

UKRAINE

ENVIRONMENT

TALIBAN

GREECE

POLITICS

ARE REBELS IN UKRAINE BUILDING A DIRTY BOMB?

The pro-Russian separatists have access to a radioactive bunker. Kiev fears they plan to weaponize it

LESS THAN a mile behind the rebel front line in eastern Ukraine, the abandoned warehouses of the Donetsk chemical factory sprawl across a chunk of the city's westernmost suburb. The homes surrounding it bear the scars of the past year's artillery bombardment. Whole apartment blocks have been burned out, and low-rise buildings are roofless and riddled with shrapnel holes. Long-suffering elderly residents potter about the devastated streets of Donetsk's Oktyabrsky district, by now oblivious to the thunder of shell-fire just a few hundred yards away. They are also unaware of a second grave danger lying deep within the grounds of that nearby chemical plant.

Within the grounds of the plant, buried under 10 feet of black soil, is a concrete and steel bunker, 65 feet long, 33 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Soviet scientists designed and built its reinforced walls in 1961. It houses about 12 tons of waste. From 1961 to 1966, the USSR's research,

industrial and medical facilities dumped their most dangerous radioactive materials there, and then it was sealed. A year later, information on the contents vanished. "Data on the exact kind of radioactive materials there has been lost since 1967," says Vladimir Perevoznik, technical director of Radon, the Ukrainian state enterprise responsible for the site before it was captured by rebels. "We do know there was cesium, cobalt, strontium 90 and yttrium 90."

Most of the waste is probably cesium isotopes, Perevoznik explains. They have a shelf life ranging from two to 2.3 million years and are often used in medical radiation therapy, or in the construction industry to gauge moisture levels or wall thickness. But even a small amount of cesium can be lethal without protective casing. "A very small device with cesium 137, no bigger than a pen, was lost during the construction of a building in Kramatorsk [a town in Donetsk region] in the 1980s,"

BY
MAXIM TUCKER
[@MaxRTucker](#)



ANATOLI STEPANOV/AFP/GETTY



SNIPER ALLEY:
The war in eastern Ukraine has dragged into its second year, with both sides showing scant regard for civilian lives.

says professor Konstantin Loganovsky, head of the radiation psychoneurology department at Ukraine's National Research Center for Radiation Medicine. "Four children died from leukemia, two adults died, and 17 people were disabled for life. The ampoule had been built into the wall, and the entire building was exposed."

A 2002 inspection by Ukraine's State Nuclear Regulation Committee found that the level of radiation in the bunker was extremely high, at 725.2 billion Becquerel. To put that in context, after a tsunami struck the Fukushima nuclear reactor in 2011, the Japanese government said cesium radiation of more than 200 Becquerel per kilogram in drinking water was unsafe. In the wrong hands, cesium 137 could be used to cause organ failure, cancer or swift death.

In theory, the bunker and protective casing should render the radioactive chemicals safe, despite their proximity to the front line of the battle between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russia rebels. It's unlikely to be breached by even the heaviest shelling. "In order to get to the material itself, one needs to break the concrete cover, iron and lead layers, so the site cannot be destroyed very easily," Perevoznic says.

In other words, the safest thing to do is leave it undisturbed in the bunker. Yet in early July, Ukraine's State Security Service, the SBU, handed *Newsweek* a dossier indicating that rebel fighters had started removing the radioactive waste. Its intelligence suggests the separatist fighters have enlisted scientists from Russia to help them make a "dirty" radioactive weapon.

The dossier contains three documents that the SBU says it obtained along with hundreds of others from a hacked rebel email account. The documents, which *Newsweek* could not independently verify, appear to be military orders from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic. Written in Russian, they instruct officials to allow a group of nuclear specialists from the Russian Federation to enter the site. Apparently signed and stamped by DPR Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko, one document orders the rebel Vostok battalion to provide armed protection for the Russian scientists, while instructing the DPR's Ministry for Emergency Situations to provide vehicles to carry the waste and evacuate people living within 2 miles of the site between July 2 and 18.

It is not clear from the documents whether the Russian specialists are private individuals or employees of the Russian state. According to the instructions, the removal of the waste needs to be carried out "to prevent an ecological disaster."

Russia's state nuclear agency, Rosatom, denied sending specialists to the site. "There



ON EDGE: Residents of the Oktobersky district, close to the front line between pro-Russian rebels and Ukrainian forces, endure frequent shelling that drives them into bomb shelters like this one.

were no official requests [for us] to deliver services to Donetsk," says Andrei Ivanov, a Rosatom spokesman. "Furthermore, the information that there is radioactive waste at the specified factory is open to question." Ivanov adds that there are a small number of private Russian companies capable of removing radioactive waste.

The dossier also contains a report from an undercover SBU agent in Donetsk and refers to intercepted radio and telephone communications. It is this agent's report, based on information apparently gathered during a vodka-soaked night with a separatist fighter and passed clandestinely to an SBU handler, that has sparked fears that the DPR is working on a dirty bomb. (The SBU said it could not provide recordings or transcripts of these conversations to *Newsweek*.)

According to the agent's report, a member of the rebel Somalia battalion boasted that the unit's infamous leader, Mikhail Tolstykh, better known by his nickname, Givi, told his fighters that the DPR "would soon have an atomic weapon." Tolstykh is infamous for his indiscretion. His unit uploaded a film of him beating and threatening Ukrainian prisoners of war at Donetsk airport in January. He has been sanctioned by the European Union for his role in the conflict.

Yuriy Tandit, chief adviser to SBU Director Vasily Hyrtsak, said, "The DPR plans to use radioactive material to create a dirty bomb with which it can blackmail the international community and the government of Ukraine."

The SBU says intelligence suggests that Russian specialists visited the site and moved some of the waste to a military base in June.



During a visit to Donetsk in mid-July, *Newsweek* confronted the DPR's deputy defense minister, Eduard Basurin, with the documents. Sitting on the terrace at the Legend Café, he scowled momentarily. Then, flashing a somewhat forced smile, he threw the printouts down on the table and ordered another beer.

"Fake," he said. "Why is this fake? It refers to people and special units that do not exist. And we don't have any repository." When pressed, Basurin acknowledged that the individuals addressed in the correspondence are DPR officials. It is only the Russian specialists who cannot be traced. Over the course of the interview, toward the end of his last lager, Basurin's story started to shift. "Everyone knows that there is a small repository with waste," he said. "It also existed during Ukrainian times."

Asked if he knows the bunker contains cesium, he said, "Maybe. I don't know. There were so-called radioactive metals—everyone knows about that. But the story that we have a repository here and that we signed an agreement with Russia is fake." Asked about Zakharchenko's stamp and signature, he was evasive. "I don't know what his signature looks like. But it is easy to fake."

A NATO official declined to comment, saying the alliance is "not in a position to offer an assessment on the specific issue raised." U.S. and U.K. intelligence were unable to confirm or dispute the evidence in the dossier, but diplomatic sources say the issue was referred to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which raised it during the talks on July 21 in Belarus with Russia and the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. The OSCE, which has a monitoring mission in Donetsk, would say only that it has "noted" the dossier.

In Donetsk, *Newsweek* was able to verify that the Vostok battalion controls access to the waste facility. Several civilians living a little over a mile away said they had periodically been offered help to evacuate, but had not been forced to leave the area at any particular time. Tight security at the checkpoints made it impossible to get close to the plant.

If the SBU's intelligence is accurate, the development of a rebel dirty bomb would bring an alarming new dimension to a war that has grown increasingly savage as it drags into a second year. The U.N. estimates more than 6,700 people have been killed.

Although a dirty bomb has nothing like the destructive capacity of an atomic bomb, the threat



of such a weapon in the hands of an ill-disciplined force is a terrifying prospect. The extent of radioactive contamination would mostly be determined by method of delivery and wind patterns, experts say. The threat is greatest if radioactive materials can be refined to dust and dispersed by a high-explosive detonation at a great height, or if radiation contaminates a water supply. Detonation at ground level is unlikely to spread radiation far. "A dirty bomb actually has a limited radiological impact," says Loganovsky. "But after an explosion, there will be chaos and panic in society. Normal life will be destroyed by fear of radiation poisoning, so it's a very significant threat."

Despite a supposed cease-fire, the conflict shows no sign of resolution, and rebel discipline continues to be suspect. Driving out of Donetsk, past the city's bombed-out bridges and its scattered anti-tank defenses, *Newsweek* went through five fortified checkpoints, four of them defended

THE REBEL UNIT'S LEADER ALLEGEDLY TOLD HIS FIGHTERS THAT THE DPR "WOULD SOON HAVE AN ATOMIC WEAPON."

by a handful of teenage boys and a couple of aging superiors. At the last checkpoint before Ukrainian territory, sunburnt soldiers swayed with their Kalashnikovs, visibly drunk. A solitary prostitute lingered nearby, clad in white knee-high boots and little else.

"This war won't end until we have the whole of Donetsk and Luhansk regions," said one separatist fighter. "We'll kick the 'Ukrops' back to Kiev."

But with Russian support muted as President Vladimir Putin uses the Iran nuclear deal to negotiate a thaw in relations with the West, the rebels have limited resources to achieve that goal. Now Ukraine says a dirty bomb could be one of them. **N**



TURKEY PLAYING CHICKEN

On the brink of peace with Kurdish separatists, President Erdogan opts to go back to war

TOWARD THE end of July, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan went to war. On his orders, 40 jets pounded strongholds in northern Iraq belonging to Kurdish separatists, killing at least 190 militants, according to the Turkish military. Turkish police also rounded up 1,050 terrorist suspects in raids all over the country—some of them supporters of ISIS and radical leftist groups, but over 80 percent of them suspects linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. At the same time, Kurdish militants ambushed army vehicles, shot policemen on the streets of Turkish cities and bombed police stations, killing at least 13 in the bloodiest fortnight of Turk-Kurd violence in decades.

Just months after Erdogan came within a whisker of striking a grand peace deal with the Kurds, which would have ended a 30-year-old insurgency in southeast Turkey that has claimed nearly 40,000 lives, the war is on again. "It's not possible for us to continue the peace process with those who threaten our national unity and brotherhood," Erdogan said as he announced the airstrikes in retaliation for PKK attacks on Turkish soldiers.

The switch from near-peace to all-out war has not only been sudden—it is also a radical U-turn for Erdogan and his conservative Islamist AK Party. For most of his 12 years in power, Erdogan has been an ally of Turkey's 20-million-strong Kurdish minority. "I know how my Kurdish brothers

have suffered," Erdogan told a rally in Diyarbakir, Turkey's biggest ethnic Kurdish city, in 2011. Ditching decades of nationalist distrust, Erdogan declared an end to forcible assimilation of the Kurds and legalized Kurdish-language television stations. And this February, his top lieutenants sat down with PKK representatives in Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace to hammer out the details of a full disarmament of the insurgent group and negotiate its full withdrawal from Turkish soil.

"The talks came very, very close to a breakthrough," says one senior Western diplomat in Ankara who followed the peace process in detail. "But the AK Party leadership took a decision to stall a grand deal on the Kurdish question till after [parliamentary] elections in June.... They were saying to the Kurds: You vote for the AK Party, and we'll give you what you want at the negotiating table."

Erdogan said as much when he addressed a rally in Gaziantep in March. "Are you ready for a decisive settlement [to the Kurdish question]?" Erdogan asked supporters. "Then, brothers, give us 400 deputies and let this issue be resolved peacefully."

The problem was that Turkey's Kurds didn't listen. They deserted the AK Party in droves and voted instead for a new, upstart pro-Kurdish movement called the Peoples' Democratic Party, or HDP. In a shocking result, the HDP scored 13 percent of the vote, passing a 10 percent threshold

BY
OWEN MATTHEWS
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CAGDAS ERDOGAN/AP

that allowed the party to enter the parliament with 80 MPs—and depriving Erdogan’s AK Party of an overall majority for the first time since 2002.

Overnight, the AK Party turned its rhetorical and political guns on the HDP and its charismatic young leader, Selahattin Demirtas. Deputy Prime Minister Yalcin Akdogan—who represented the government in the Dolmabahce talks—denounced the HDP as a “front” and “sub-contractor” for the PKK, which is designated a terrorist group by Turkey and the United States.

It was the PKK, though, that pushed rising tensions into violence. On July 16, the group, which is headquartered on the Kandil Mountain range in northern Iraq, announced the end of a two-year-old cease-fire and days later began killing Turkish policemen. When a suicide bomber trained in Syria by ISIS killed 32 young pro-Kurdish student volunteers as they gathered in the border town of Suruc, Turkey, the PKK’s response was to blame the Turkish security services for allowing the attack to happen, and it retaliated by killing four Turkish soldiers. The Turkish state’s response was swift and devastating—airstrikes against ISIS targets inside Syria, as well as PKK targets inside Iraq. Ankara also finally succumbed to months of

U.S. pressure and allowed U.S. warplanes to use the Incirlik Air Base in southeast Turkey to wage an air campaign against ISIS.

Though the PKK undoubtedly began the shooting war, it’s also true that conflict with the Kurds suits the AK Party’s electoral purposes. So far, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu—a close Erdogan ally—has failed to strike a postelection coalition deal with any opposition party. Those talks are ongoing. But a more radical way forward, reportedly favored by top AK Party figures including Erdogan himself, would be to break the coalition deadlock by calling for new elections. It’s a high-risk strategy—but if the AK Party manages to regain a large enough majority, Erdogan can press

“PEACE IS NOT VERY WELCOME WHEN IT DOES NOT SERVE [THE AK PARTY’S] POLITICAL PURPOSE.”

CONSEQUENCES:
A suicide bombing blamed on ISIS that killed 32 people in southern Turkey has led to protests in Istanbul (below) and renewed violence between Turks and Kurds.





on with his pet project of rewriting Turkey's constitution to create a French-style executive presidency, thereby giving himself sweeping new powers. "Erdogan asked himself what had prevented him from exercising full executive power," says veteran commentator Murat Yetkin. "The answer is the HDP. If the HDP can be pushed back under the 10 percent threshold in a new election, the AK Party can rise again and the problem can be solved."

Clearly, the AK Party is counting on renewed conflict with the Kurds to discredit the HDP. In the wake of the PKK attacks, Erdogan called for Demirtas and the HDP's MPs to be stripped of their parliamentary immunity so that they could be investigated for "links to terrorist organizations." The newly minted parliamentarians of the HDP, for their part, welcomed the suggestion and even moved to voluntarily surrender their immunity—and suggested that all other MPs do likewise. They also lodged a cheeky counterblow, petitioning for a host of top AK Party officials to be investigated for corruption and enriching themselves while in office. Clearly, all hope of a true reconciliation with the Kurds for the time being has taken second place in Erdogan's mind to destroying the HDP.

"Erdogan began disliking the peace process with the PKK when the HDP emerged as an obstacle for his presidential ambitions," says Mustafa Akyol, author of *Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty*. "Those ambitions come first, in other words, and peace is not very welcome when it does not serve [the AK Party's] political purpose."

Renewed hostilities worry Turkey's allies—and complicate the U.S.-led efforts to combat ISIS. In Syria, Kurdish fighters known as the People's Defense Units, or YPG, are the main bulwark against the expansion of ISIS—and have been receiving weapons, air and intelligence support from the United States. But with the YPG closely allied with the PKK, Ankara is deeply wary of anything that strengthens Syria's Kurds, who also have begun establishing self-ruled

cantons all along the border with Turkey. Ankara opposes these, lest the Syrian Kurds' independence inspire their ethnic brothers in Turkey.

"Ideally," says the Ankara-based Western diplomat, "the Turks would like to see [ISIS] and the Kurds fight each other into the ground—then come along and whack the winner."

It's hard to blame Erdogan for responding to PKK attacks. But though Kurd-bashing may suit the AK Party's short-term political ends, it's potentially disastrous for Turkey. In the years of Erdogan's rule, Turkey's gross domestic product has tripled, and the country has acted as a rock of stability as its neighbors, from Iraq to Greece, have been overwhelmed by turbulence. For the Erdogan generation, the old tribal differences

"THE TURKS WOULD LIKE TO SEE [ISIS] AND THE KURDS FIGHT EACH OTHER INTO THE GROUND—THEN COME ALONG AND WHACK THE WINNER."

between Turk and Kurd that saw the southeast of the country turned into a vast militarized zone in the 1980s—and millions of Kurdish villagers expelled from their homes—were set aside in favor of making money and pursuing the good life. Renewed war risks escalation into nationwide conflict that could derail everything Erdogan created—from Turkey's prosperity and stability to his own legitimacy. **N**

FOG OF WAR: A couple try to escape tear gas fired by police during a protest in Istanbul blaming the government for the Suruc suicide bombing.



HUSEYIN ALDEMIR/REUTERS



Biomass Murder

HUMANS HAVE BURNED HALF THE WORLD'S FUEL RESOURCES IN JUST TWO MILLENNIA

By now, the lesson is clear: Burning coal and petroleum produces carbon dioxide, the heat-trapping gas that contributes to the warming of our globe. That alone is cause enough to believe fossil fuels are not a sustainable basis for society. But here's another reason: It took millions, even billions, of years for these fuels to accumulate, and we're running through them at a startlingly fast pace. A study published in July in *PNAS* calculates that we've burned nearly half of Earth's biomass in the past 2,000 years, with 10 percent of that being consumed in the past century alone.

Study author John Schramski, of the University of Georgia, likens Earth to a battery. Plants have gradually harvested the sun's solar energy over eons, converting it into chemical energy in the form of fossil fuels, reserved in the Earth forever—until we got to it. When we burn that stuff in factories and automobiles, much of the energy that the Earth had been storing returns to space in the form of heat.

Energy cannot be created or destroyed. But biomass can. And now, "Earth's biomass battery is running out," Schramski says. Earth's biomass is the key factor distinguishing it from all

the inhospitable planets in our solar system, which contain none that we know of, says William Schlesinger, an emeritus biogeochemist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies. By burning so much of it, we are becoming more similar to one of these lifeless worlds, Schlesinger says.

It's hard to say exactly how long it took to produce all Earth's biomass, since it comes from many different plants, as well as algae and other sources. One 2003 study written by biological scientist Jeff Dukes suggests that it would take approximately 400 years for all of Earth's life forms to produce the amount of

energy used by humans in a single year.

Of course, people have burned biomass throughout history, and fire has shaped humans and civilization in indelible ways. It's probably not feasible to ever cut down our fossil fuel usage to zero. A natural question, then: How much biomass can we burn and still be sustainable? Schramski says he doesn't know the answer—though given the rate at which combustion exceeds biological productivity, it's probably "a lot less"—but he hopes his new study gets people thinking about the problem.

BY
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SOURCE: *PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES*, JULY 15



THE MANY DEATHS OF MULLAH OMAR

Inside the mysterious fade-out of one of the world's most hunted men

JUST BEFORE the end of Ramadan this year, I received an unexpected call from one of Mullah Mohammed Omar's longtime family friends. He had just learned a secret held by only a tiny circle of Omar's most trusted associates: The supreme leader of the Afghan Taliban was dead.

Omar was one of the world's most wanted men, with a \$10 million bounty on his head,

and rumors of his death had been circulating since he vanished in late 2001. The last verifiable sighting placed him on the back of a Honda motorbike, heading into the mountains outside Kandahar while fighters for the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance closed in on the city. But the information this caller had was of a different sort: His claims were very detailed, and he was

BY
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*With Sam Seibert
in New York*



LAST KNOWN ABODE: Villagers pick through the rubble of Mullah Omar's compound in Kandahar soon after U.S. bombers destroyed it in December 2001.

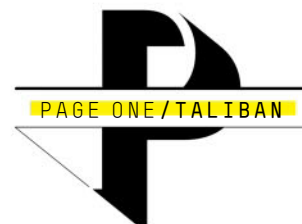
extraordinarily well-placed to know the facts. He asked not to be quoted by name on such a sensitive topic, but he and his family are highly respected for their longtime humanitarian work in Pakistan's Afghan exile community.

Omar died in Afghanistan, my contact said. People have often assumed that the Taliban leader fled across the border into Pakistan, like most of his surviving followers, but in fact he refused to leave his country of birth. If you're willing to trust the Pakistanis, you might as well move to the United States, he told anyone who suggested the relocation.

Instead, he altered his distinctive appearance as best he could and tried to blend in among his countrymen. (It helped that he had never permitted photographs of himself.) After the Taliban regrouped as an insurgency in the early 2000s, he began communicating with the leadership via a dedicated personal courier. Omar gathered a few loyal allies and even led them in occasional forays against the occupiers, the family friend said. He was wounded slightly a couple of times, but never seriously injured.

What killed Omar? Some have suggested a heart attack, but according to my caller he was a long way from any doctor who could have given a proper diagnosis when he died in January 2013. The theory seems plausible, however; Omar would have been about 60 years old, although his date of birth was never publicly disclosed, and he might not have known it himself. Longtime family friends have said he was born on a roadside somewhere between Uruzgan province and Kandahar, where his desperately poor parents were headed in hope of finding work. His mother was riding a donkey. When she went into labor, she dismounted; after the delivery, she climbed onto the animal's back, cradling her infant, and traveled on. His parents doubted he would survive.

Decades later, when the end finally came, Omar was holed up for the winter among the desolate mountains of Now Zad district in Helmand province, in an area of tiny villages known collectively as Taizeini. Few maps show the place, which is roughly 100 miles northwest of Kandahar. A good friend, Mullah Abdul Jabar, was at his side to the end, according to my source. Jabar, who could not be reached for comment, had served during the years of Taliban rule as governor of central Baghlan province. According to one of Jabar's relatives, he never went home after



the regime's collapse. Instead, he faithfully accompanied Omar as his messenger and attendant. The family friend said Jabar was the Taliban leader's only link to the Quetta Shura, the group's ruling council.

Omar told Jabar what to do in the event of his death or capture—get word to Mullah Sheikh Abdul Hakim. The religious scholar, a longtime friend and adviser of Omar's, makes his home in Quetta, the southwestern Pakistani city where most of the Taliban leadership resides. Hakim and Jabar quickly relayed the news of Omar's death to three senior Taliban figures. One was Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, the head of the Quetta Shura. Another was Mullah Qayyum Zakir, director of the Taliban's military council at the time. The third was another religious scholar and longtime Omar friend, Mullah Abdul Salam, who lives and preaches in the city of Kuchlak, a few miles outside Quetta. (None of them could be reached for comment.)

My source said he knows of only one other person who might have been told of Omar's death. Mullah Gul Agha Akhund, another Quetta Shura member, had fought alongside Omar against the Soviet occupation in the

ONLY THREE OR FOUR PEOPLE ATTENDED THE FUNERAL RITES. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP HIS DEATH A SECRET.

1980s. In recent years, he has been widely described as the only member of the leadership in regular communication with Omar—and even he was never able to speak directly with his old comrade. (*Newsweek* was unable to contact him for comment.) Most of Omar's family, placed under Pakistan's protection in Karachi and Peshawar, could never speak to the Taliban leader, for fear the U.S. might find out and somehow trace him through them. Secrecy was essential.

A week after Jabar brought his news to Quetta, the council chiefs Mansoor and Zakir held a private meeting with the two religious scholars. The family friend said Mullahs Salam and Hakim formally gave Omar's turban to Mansoor, appointing him to be Omar's successor as Amir ul-Momineen, or Commander of the Faithful. Sheikh Hakim reportedly told him: "You are now our leader. You must follow the path undertaken by Mullah Omar."

My caller said Zakir wanted to announce Omar's death immediately, but the others persuaded him to keep it secret. The war was at a critical juncture: President Barack Obama had just announced plans to begin a drawdown of U.S. combat forces in Afghanistan. But while the Taliban waited for a pullout, Omar's death created huge problems for Mansoor. The one thing that kept the Taliban united was his fighters' absolute devotion to their founder and spiritual leader. The Quetta Shura went so far as to ban any questions about Omar's fate. Violators would be referred to a Taliban court.

Meanwhile, the stand-in emir was left to wind down the Taliban's unwieldy war machine. Many of his fighters had no recollection of a

world without Mullah Omar—let alone any memories of an Afghanistan at peace. Mansoor needed to give them time to adjust. In June 2013, less than six months after he's said to have received Omar's turban, the Taliban finally opened its long-awaited political office in Qatar and began talking with the Americans. The talks broke down almost immediately.

While the military chief kept his mouth shut, he was distraught about Omar's death, my source said. In April 2014, Zakir stepped down from his post, pleading ill health and overwork. At the time, Taliban officials told me the famously hawkish military chief and Mansoor had been arguing for months about the ruling council leader's desire to make peace. But Omar's family friend said Zakir was simply too depressed to go on. He said he no longer wanted any official post in the leadership: "Without Mullah Omar, I hate everything."

When my caller hung up, I began phoning and sending emails to check out the story. Preparations for the traditional end-of-Ramadan festivities made many of my best Taliban sources hard to reach, but I kept trying. Coincidentally or otherwise, the family friend had contacted me on July 15—the same day the Taliban

SCARS OF WAR: A map of Afghanistan painted on the wall of a school in Tieranon, a village near Kandahar, is pockmarked with bullet holes.



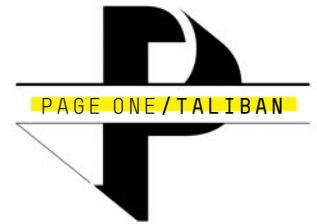
chose to publish this year's Eid al-Fitr greeting to the faithful. It was signed by Mullah Omar, as it has been every year. Some of my Taliban contacts insisted that Omar was not dead and would soon prove it publicly. Others pleaded ignorance. But no one bothered to pretend the message proved Omar was alive. For years, his longtime followers have quietly conceded that his signed statements are far too polished to have been composed by the Taliban's inarticulate and barely literate founder.

It was impossible for me to confirm then that Omar was dead. Even before the Quetta Shura imposed its ban on questions about his health, it was a dangerous topic among the Taliban. "It bears a stink of disloyalty if anyone asks about his medical condition or what he's been doing," a Haqqani Network commander told me. A former Taliban fighter said, "We don't need to put him in danger by calling for definite proof that he's alive."

A second report of Omar's death hit the Internet a week after I got that call from the family friend. This one was from a source not so sympathetic to the Taliban leadership: a tiny but bloodthirsty splinter faction that uses the name Fidai Mahaz, or the Suicide Front. The group quit the mainstream Taliban in 2013 in open rebellion against Mansoor's willingness to engage in peace talks.

On July 22, the group's website published a sensational accusation that Omar had been "martyred" by his old associates Akhtar Mansoor and Gul Agha. According to Fidai Mahaz, Omar's death resulted from a violent quarrel the pair had with Omar, who objected to the recent opening of talks with the Americans in Qatar. As if that wasn't shocking enough, Fidai Mahaz claimed the alleged murder took place in July 2013—during the holy month of Ramadan. The group said the burial took place in Zabul province. Proof will come, the group promised. After the claim was posted, I contacted Mullah Najibullah, the leader of Fidai Mahaz. He told me only that further details would be released when the time was right.

The group's allegation echoed across Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites for another week. Then, on Wednesday, July 29, Afghanistan's intelligence agency spoke up. Abdul Haseeb Sidiqi, a spokesman for the country's National Directorate of Security, told reporters for a host of news outlets that Omar



was definitely dead. The Taliban leader "died suspiciously in a hospital in Karachi around April 2013," Sediqi told *The Wall Street Journal*. Another Afghan intelligence official told *The New York Times* that Omar had been "suffering from a disease." He added: "We do not know the whereabouts of his graveyard or whether he received a ceremony."


Omar's family friend stands by his version. The Mullah died in January 2013, he says, in Helmand province. His burial took place in the same village where his life ended, in Now Zad district. Only three or four people attended the funeral rites. It was the only way to keep his death a secret.

On July 30, the Taliban announced Omar's demise, and the next day the ruling council named Mansoor his successor. The group gave no date or cause of death for the emir, beyond saying it was "due to the illness he was suffering from," but insisted he had never left Afghan soil.

Meanwhile peace talks have been suspended

THE LAST VERIFIABLE SIGHTING OF OMAR PLACED HIM ON THE BACK OF A HONDA MOTORBIKE, HEAD-ING INTO THE MOUNTAINS OUTSIDE KANDAHAR.

indefinitely while Taliban hard-liners struggle to unseat Mansoor. The outcome may depend on who can win the support of Omar's eldest son, Mullah Yaqub, who has not made any public comment. Will the hard-line jihadis of the self-styled Islamic State gain a wave of new Afghan recruits? Can the Kabul government avoid a collapse into factions and civil war, as happened in the early 1980s after the Soviet pullout?

It's enough to make you miss the simpler times when the big question was only "Where is Mullah Omar?" 



DEATH BY A THOUSAND BAILOUTS

The harsh terms imposed on Greece have led many to question the EU's future

"ALL DIPLOMACY is the continuation of war by other means," former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai once quipped. These days, the same might be said for eurozone summits.

The European Union was founded to ease the continent's toxic wartime legacy, to allow Germany to help lead the continent, not dominate it. But in the aftermath of Greece's most recent bailout this summer, the harsh austerity terms imposed on Greece have created an unprecedented level of animosity between the two countries. Now, as the rancor ripples across borders, many are questioning the EU's political and economic future.

Under the terms of the bailout, Greece receives funding of up to 86 billion euros (\$94 billion). In exchange, the coalition government, led by the left-wing Syriza party, must implement further austerity measures, increase value-added taxes and liberalize the rule-bound Greek economy. Greece must place national assets worth 50 billion euros (\$55.1 billion) into a privatization fund that will be supervised by European institutions.

The Greek parliament approved the deal on July 16, and the backlash was fierce. Zoe Constantopoulou, a Syriza lawmaker, says the bailout terms amounted to "social genocide." Even moderate Greek politicians say the harsh terms of the deal will increase fear, insecurity and resentment in Greece. "There will be very strict

monitoring of how Greece implements the new measures, almost policing the Greek economy," says former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou. "These have been put in place to create trust for the German taxpayer, but will create more distrust for Greek citizens. Greece's access to markets is now more difficult. Some of the burden should have been taken off."

Meanwhile, the European banks that loaned billions of euros to Greece escaped penalty. "If you are a drug addict, you are to blame for your addiction, but the dealer also bears some responsibility," says Denis MacShane, a former minister for Europe and author of *Brexit: How Britain Will Leave Europe*. "Greece is an easy whipping boy, [but] French, German and Dutch banks lent recklessly."

The result: Postwar Greek-German relations have never been worse, analysts say. The trauma of the bailout is compounded by the enduring trauma of World War II, when Greece suffered one of the harshest Nazi occupations. What has surprised many observers is the ease with which both sides have slid into stereotyping, calling Greece a lazy, feckless nation that can't be trusted, and Germany a Fourth Reich run by Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Greeks who believe the latter point to Walter Funk, the Nazi economics minister and one



BY ADAM LEBOR
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BROKEN: Workers repair the euro sculpture in front of the European Central Bank building in Frankfurt. After Greece's bailout, some analysts say the euro is no longer fixable.

of Hitler's most important economic theorists. Funk raised the idea of a German-dominated European monetary union in 1940. He recognized that the union would be complicated, in part because of different countries' standards of living. Yet Funk, like many modern-day European politicians, was an optimist.

As the Greek crisis shows, however, Funk's faith, like that of the euro architects, was wildly misplaced. A currency union of highly disparate states without a shared central budget or fiscal policy was always going to be hobbled. "Greece," says Peter Doyle, a former division chief in

"GREECE IS AN EASY WHIPPING BOY, BUT FRENCH, GERMAN AND DUTCH BANKS LENT RECKLESSLY."

the International Monetary Fund's European department, "is the canary in the coal mine. If the canary dies, it does not tell you that there is something wrong with the canary, but with the mine. Greece is the canary, and the eurozone is the mine."

Burdened by debt, corruption and an over-intrusive bureaucracy, Greece's economy will be hard to repair. What will be more difficult to fix, however, are the mutual misperceptions of Greek and German citizens. "The inability of either side to even begin to understand the other's perspective has inflicted lasting damage," says Ian Bremmer, president of the Eurasia Group, a global political risk consultancy firm. "They aren't really trying to cooperate."

Worse still, in the aftermath of the agreement, many observers have begun to question how decisions are made within the European Union. A French diplomat with knowledge of the Brussels negotiations tells *Newsweek*, on the condition of anonymity, that Germany was the most important voice at the July summit. "We knew that once Germany agreed to the terms it would take 20 minutes to convince the others," the diplomat says. "As long as Germany was OK with it, the other hard-liners would be as well."

But Germany's win in Brussels came at a potentially high cost. "It has challenged the fundamental European value of solidarity and has made other EU member states increasingly question the German role within Europe," says Julian Rappold, of the German Council on Foreign Relations, a Berlin-based think tank. Papandreou agrees. "We are seeing a default to the biggest gorilla in the pack being the one that makes decisions," he says. "That will create even more tension."

Today, 19 countries share a common currency, the euro. But without a common budget and fiscal policy, some analysts say the eurozone is hindered by the economic mismatch between member states; the average household income per capita in Germany is \$31,252 per year, but in Greece it's \$18,575. By subjecting Athens to extensive regulation and supervision, some say the technocrats may have started the slow death of the single currency and of the EU itself. "Everything the Germans did in preparation for the summit...was intended to encourage Greece to leave the euro," says Doyle. "It's outrageous. This deal...was never intended to work."

Already, the harsh terms imposed on Greece have boosted the anti-EU movement in the



EURO SCOLD: German Chancellor Angela Merkel, left, and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras after a March press conference in Berlin. Postwar Greek and German relations have never been worse.

United Kingdom. By the end of 2017, David Cameron, the British prime minister, has promised a referendum on EU membership. Cameron will campaign for Britain to remain in the EU, but most in Britain say the country needs to decide where it stands in relation to Europe. The referendum will do just that.

No matter what happens in the U.K., Europe's leaders have a major dilemma. The eurozone cri-

"IF YOU ARE A DRUG ADDICT, YOU ARE TO BLAME FOR YOUR ADDICTION, BUT THE DEALER ALSO BEARS SOME RESPONSIBILITY."

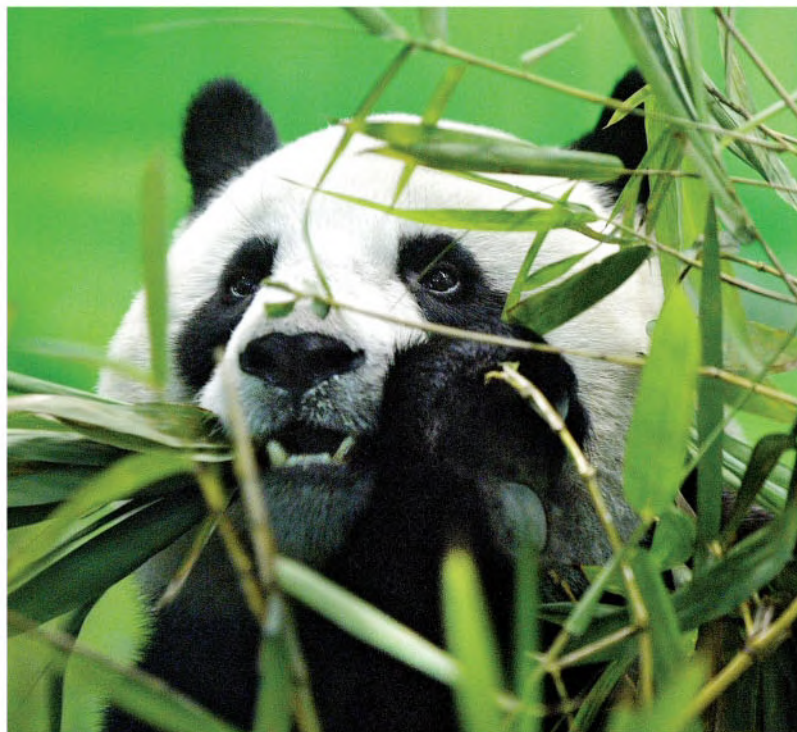
sis has highlighted how, if the euro is to survive, the continent's fiscal, economic and political policies must coalesce, which would require changes to the EU's founding treaty. But the pummeling Greece has taken from Germany means there is even less appetite for closer relations. As Bremmer says: "Europe has become a bloodless institution, an efficiency-enforcement mechanism, rather than a union or a collective aspiration." **N**

ADAM LEBOR is the author of *Tower of Basel: The Shadowy History of the Secret Bank that Runs the World*.

Names in the News

UP, DOWN AND SIDEWAYS


[@WisdomWatch](#)



PANDAS

 Panda in Taiwan zoo apparently caught faking her pregnancy to get better living conditions. (It's happened before.) Since panda births in captivity are so rare, pregnant females get luxury hotel treatment, including more food and AC during summer. Yuan Yuan busted for her strategy of "bear and grin it."

LAUGHING GAS

 Scientists say nitrous oxide is significant global-warming threat and depletes ozone layer. They rank it behind carbon dioxide and methane as hazard, and blame increased use of fertilizers. Dentist the menace.



ANCIENT HUTS

 Ground where southern Africa shelters burned down contains clues about unexplained reversals of poles; it's related to weak spot in Earth's magnetic field where some think it is "leaking." Damn you, Snowden!




CHICKEN FIGHTS

 Small riot in India after one family's chicken bites teen, who retaliates with swift kick. Police made two arrests, and three people are hospitalized. Not the first guy to complain he's henpecked.



DAYDREAMING

 Researchers studying how human brain works have found that letting your mind wander will cause your pupils to expand. Attention, teachers: So will letting them eat Big Macs in class.



PENILE IMPLANTS

 Residents in English suburb appalled after workers use wrong paint for road repairs and leave large, suggestive shapes. "It's a right mess," says dismayed father. Take the shlong way home.







THE GREATEST CANDIDATE

IN U.S.
HISTORY!

IN WORLD
HISTORY!

OF ALL
TIME!

FOR YEARS, DONALD TRUMP'S BOMBASTIC SELF-PROMOTION HAS BEEN AN AMUSING SIDESHOW IN POLITICS. NOBODY'S LAUGHING NOW, AND TO EXPLAIN WHY, **NEWSWEEK** CALLED ON STAFF WRITER **BILL POWELL**, WHO HAS KNOWN AND COVERED THE DONALD FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS. HIS DISPATCH FROM THE FRONT LINES OF THE MOST AMAZING, EXASPERATING CAMPAIGN THE GOP HAS EVER SEEN MAY MAKE YOU LAUGH. OR CRY

WE WERE FINALLY SITTING IN DONALD TRUMP'S OFFICE FOR OUR FINAL INTERVIEW

THE LOUDEST MOUTH IN THE ROOM: Trump is naturally bombastic but also knows that bluster is good for his brand.

'HE'S A DISASTER!'

NEARLY THREE decades later, I'm riding with Trump in an elevator in Trump Tower on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, heading up to his office just after he's done yet another interview in the lobby with yet another anchor from Fox News. This time—you might have heard—he is running for president, and my editor at *Newsweek* asked me to fly to New York City from my post in Shanghai to follow him around again to try to figure out why he's running and, more important and interesting than that, why he's in the lead for the Republican nomination.

The surreal quality of all that was evident the minute I stepped into the Trump Tower lobby. The media epicenter of this “mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore” populist presidential campaign is the Trump Bar, where a gin and tonic costs \$11.88 (not bad by Midtown Manhattan standards). The bar sits across from the bank of elevators, and the long line of interviewers—Fox News's Greta Van Susteren one day, Fox News's Eric Bolling the next, with the occasional CNN inquisitor thrown in—set up their cameras and lights there. Periodically, Trump descends from his office, waves at the inevitably startled tourists who happen to be in the lobby, sits down across from whoever it is who's next in line to interview him and does his shtick:

“I'm gonna get back our jobs from the Chinese and the Mexicans and the Japanese and all the other countries that are screwing us!”

“[Fill in the blank]”—Jeb Bush, the Iran nuclear deal, the Mexican border—“is a disaster!”

at the end of a monthlong reporting odyssey. A colleague and I had tailed him pretty much everywhere he went. I flew with him down to Atlantic City in his retrofitted French military helicopter, rode with him in his limos and chatted with him in his various offices and at his home. We were reporting a cover profile for *Newsweek*. It was 1987, and Trump back then was a real estate and casino magnate who was, for the first time in what would become a quadrennial drill over the next 30 years, pretending to contemplate running for president.

Doonesbury, the popular adult cartoon strip, had repeatedly and savagely mocked the idea, but the political class had begun to take notice. One day in his office, he gleefully reeled off the names on his phone messages from media poo-bahs. “Look at this: Fox Butterfield, *Noo Yoooik Times*; David ‘Broduh,’ *Washington Post*. It goes on and on!”

He was loving the attention, but now, with the deadline to get his name on the ballot in New Hampshire looming, he was ready to put an end to the flirtation. Sitting behind his desk, he looked at the two of us and smiled. “You guys want a scoop for your story?” he asked. “I’ll give you a scoop: I’m *not* going to run for president.” He paused, letting the not terribly surprising news sink in, then waved a finger at us and added, “but if I *did* run, I’d win!”

And then all of us—Trump included—cracked up laughing.



TRAVIS DOVE/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REUTERS



“John Kerry doesn’t know how to negotiate! He’s a disaster!”

And on and on until the interview ends, whereupon it’s back up to his office, often for yet another interview, this one on the phone, maybe with Trump fan-gal Laura Ingraham or one of the other conservative talk show hosts he regularly feeds nowadays. While he has made the occasional forays to Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina in the past few months—and his aides say there will be more of them after the first Republican primary debate on August 6—he is for now dominating the news about the Republican campaign by simply riding up and down the elevator in one of the many buildings named after him, to the bar named after him, and walking past the gift shop stocked with his ties, T-shirts and even the dopey golf hats like the one he wore on his recent trip to the Texas-Mexico border.

Trump has only spent, according to his initial filing, \$2 million on the campaign since announcing in mid-June. Over the same time period, the Jeb Bush campaign has shelled out more than \$3 million while raising more than \$11 million—and has bubbles to show for it. The communications director for the Trump campaign is a 20-something who was moved over from Trump’s company; a couple of months ago, she was writing press releases about golf course openings. She has no assistant.

It’s true that on the fifth floor of Trump Tower the

HIS CORE TENET FOR A CAMPAIGN IS, “ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK—NEVER DEFEND.”



campaign has cleared out a big space for offices, but for now it’s just a vast, empty room. There’s an Iowa flag on one wall and on another a sign (evidently Trump channeling his inner Bill Belichick) reading: “Do your job.”

But there’s no one there—not a soul. That’s in contrast to, say, the Ted Cruz campaign headquarters, where dozens of staffers and volunteers man the phones, frantically try to raise money, bash out direct mail pitches and mull campaign strategies for Iowa and beyond. And still, as Trump tells me, chortling, “The polls are through the roof!” And indeed, just before the first debate, Trump is killing the field, ahead of Bush, Scott Walker, Marco Rubio and all the other GOP wannabes.



I'm not a political reporter, and until coming to New York in late July, I have watched this unfold with one eye, from afar, believing Trump to be something of an entertaining sideshow. But then I started talking to the several friends I have who are active in GOP politics. Almost all were aghast as they watched the Trump balloon ascend. Many had spoken of their candidates for this cycle with an optimism I hadn't heard in a long while. An "embarrassment of riches," one friend (a Hollywood closet conservative) told me. The field includes experienced, competent governors, current and former, and even a smart, charismatic senator or two. "We're set up," my friend said, "to run a 'future vs. the past' election." The opponent they relish running against is Hillary Clinton, who is, in the GOP's view, an old, lifeless, brutally bad politician.

"But now," he sighs, "it's all Trump, all the time. It's beyond belief."

So it is. To try to understand it, I turned to one of the most fabled political operatives of the last 40 years: the famous (or, depending on your politics, infamous) Roger Stone. As a young man, Stone worked for Richard Nixon when he was in the White House, after being hired by Jeb Magruder, who went to jail for his involvement in the Watergate scandal. Stone was part of the so-called dirty tricks team, which did clever/evil things like make donations to political opponents in the name of non-existent organizations, such as the "Young Socialist Alliance." Stone, who once described himself as a practitioner of the "black arts" of politics, went on to work for Ronald Reagan when



**"I'VE NEVER SEEN
THE VOTERS THIS
SOUR IN MY LIFE."**

he ran for president, and then for the political consulting firm in Washington that gave George H.W. Bush (then the vice president) Lee Atwater, who became chief campaign strategist when Bush sought the White House in 1988. Atwater, in turn, "gave" the Democratic presidential candidate, Michael Dukakis, an African-American convicted murderer who committed assault, armed robbery and rape on a weekend furlough from prison during Dukakis's tenure as governor of Massachusetts. Atwater promised to "strip the bark off" of Dukakis, and "make Willie Horton his running mate." Bush won 40 states.

Stone is almost as revered and reviled in his field as his now-deceased colleague Atwater was, and he has worked for Trump on and off as a lobbyist and adviser for nearly 20 years. Now he's Trump's political consigliere: at his shoulder constantly, monitoring the Fox News interviews, huddling with him in his office for post-mortems and strategy sessions.

KENA BETANCUR/AFP/GETTY

+
THE EVERYMAN BILLIONAIRE: Trump appeals to many voters because he seems to have a blue-collar sensibility beneath those expensive suits, and he taps into a “mad as hell” groundswell.

His core tenet as a campaign adviser has always been, “Attack, attack, attack—never defend,” and Trump is a more than willing pupil. You don’t grow up in the New York real estate business and not know how to fight. His *instinct* is to fight. Trump tells me that he hasn’t initiated the campaign fire this round—“Not once, Bill!”—but he returns it, always with a heavy bit of topspin, in his inimitable and endlessly entertaining style. He’s gone after not only Bush but also Lindsey Graham (“Every time I see him on TV, he wants to bomb somebody!”), Rick Perry (“He bought a pair of glasses so he could look smart!”) and Walker (the Wisconsin governor who Trump, as of late July, trailed in Iowa). “Wisconsin,” he snarled the other day, “is in turmoil!” Hell, these days, Trump even goes after the pundits who have the temerity to criticize him. “George Will,” he declared on the radio, “is a dope!”

Stone is aware that I’ve known Trump for a long time and says, right off the bat after I sit down with him, “Can you believe that he’s even bigger now than when you first put him on the cover?”

“Roger,” I say, “that’s exactly why I’m here—to try to figure out how that happened. I live abroad, and I can’t understand why Donald is all anyone in American politics can talk about.”

Stone is more than happy to fill in my blanks. He starts with the point everyone makes: A significant percentage of the American public is really angry, and they hate the political class, whom they see as phonies who don’t “do what they say they’re going to do,” as Stone puts it. “I’ve never seen the voters this sour in my life, and they are responding to someone they see as authentic. Who’s a billionaire, says what he thinks, doesn’t need the Koch brothers’ or anyone else’s money, and yet still comes across as a regular guy. Compare that with, say, Mitt Romney.

“And the thing of it is, that’s what Donald is. He is a regular guy. He’s the opposite of a phony. He is what he is, and he has always been this way.”

Stone’s right. The blunderbuss style and the braggadocio haven’t changed a whit. Thirty years ago, everything Trump touched was “the greatest: the greatest golf course, the greatest hotel, the greatest casino. His book, *The Art of the Deal*, is, Trump told me, “one of the greatest business books of all time.” He said all of that stuff back then, and he still says it today. And *he* believes it.

Trump’s style is not calculated, but he understands—and always has—that his brand is all about the bombast. One of the things I learned while reporting that cover story so long ago—and in dealing with him off and on over the years since then—is that a lot of what he says and does, he does with a subtle wink. It’s as if to say, “Look, I know that maybe you don’t think that *The Art of the Deal* is one of the greatest business books ever written, or that this golf course I own or that hotel I just put my name on is the best in the world. But I say it anyway, because that’s just who I am, and it’s how I talk. And why should I change? Is it not working?”

This is why all three of us laughed that day in his office when he said, “But if I *did* run, I’d win!” There was a funny charm

in that. It would have been inauthentic had he *not* said it. It’s part of the reason I like Donald Trump. Always have.

Another reason I like him is that he is, as Stone says, a billionaire with everyman tastes. He’s not Romney—“Eddie Haskell with a Cayman Islands bank account,” my Hollywood GOP friend called him. I remember Trump was once invited to a fancy charity gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with all the Upper East Side elite—private equity king Henry Kravis and his then-wife Carlyne Roehm; John Gutfreund, then the CEO of Salomon Brothers, etc., etc. Trump *hated* it. He left after about 10 minutes, went back to his Trump Tower apartment, ate popcorn and watched the Giants on *Monday Night Football* while the swells sipped champagne.

He has other traits that aren’t easy to dismiss,



even if they are easy to mock. He is always going on about how he’s a tough negotiator, that he’ll get better “deals” for America (after all, he wrote *The Art of the Deal*). Stone, channeling his candidate, says for Trump, negotiating with the Chinese “would be a day at the beach.”

Campaign hyperbole? Sure. But Trump and his people aren’t lying when they say the businesses from which he emerged—New York real estate, Atlantic City casinos—have shaped him. They are tough businesses; Trump and his

people were (and are) hard-asses. When I trailed after him for a month, I witnessed several obscenity-laced screaming matches between Trump, his people and the folks on the other side of deals. I watched in Atlantic City as one of his executives went at the lawyer for the casino workers' union, the two of them swearing nonstop for more than 30 minutes. I also heard Trump get into a shouting match on a conference call with investment banks who had been burned investing in junk bonds issued by Trump companies. One friend of Trump's described him back then as a "shin-kicking, ball-busting businessman. This is not a guy who retires to the club for cocktails at 6 o'clock." So when Trump says he's a much better negotiator than Kerry will ever be, he's probably right. If my money were at stake, I'd take Trump every time over the windsurfing secretary of state.

THE APPRENTICE'S SORCERER

SO I'M ON the record saying that I like Trump personally. But that doesn't mean I came to New York City in late July thinking he had any shot at getting the Republican nomination, or even *should* have a shot. I knew Trump didn't really take poli-



tics all that seriously in the past. I also knew that Peak Trump was happening well before anyone was actually voting, and that we are still in the cable news-driven political silly season. I believed his standing in the polls—which only strengthened after his beyond the pale remarks about Senator John McCain not being a war hero—was simply a function of name recognition. Voters will eventually come to know the credible candidates, I figured as I flew in from Shanghai, and Trump will fade.

But after spending some time with him, and talking to Stone and other Trump associates, I'm no longer so sure. For one thing, Stone tells me—and political reporters I respect, like Robert Costa of *The Washington Post*, have reported—that the Trump campaign has hired very credible operatives in the key early states. That suggests this is not just a lark, a clever way for Donald Trump to extend his brand even further.

And there's more. Listen, again, to Stone, and what I'll call his

YOU'RE FIRED UP: Trump's inner circle believes his TV show, *The Apprentice*, rehabilitated his image and even made him seem presidential as he deliberated on the fates of celebrity contestants.

The Apprentice theory of politics. For 15 seasons, *The Apprentice* was a popular TV show. "Millions of people watched it," Stone says, and what did all those people see on *The Apprentice*? "They saw a guy in a blue suit in a red tie, a guy who looks presidential, sitting in a high-backed chair. They see a guy in control. A guy making decisions. He *appears* thoughtful. He mulls things for a few seconds" before deciding whether he should tell someone, "You're fired!"

The Apprentice, Stone says, "transformed Donald's image for good."

I'm reeling as he lays this out. "Wait a second," I say. "Because he's shown mulling things 'for a few seconds,' people think he can be president?"

"Yes."

At this point, I'm pushing down thoughts of seeking Chinese citizenship. "But Roger, that's a television show; it's not real. And the critique of Donald is that he doesn't know enough stuff to be president. He says things that are just *wrong*." You can, to take one example that I'm intimately familiar with, say that the Chinese currency is undervalued against the dollar. That it should be stronger. But the Chinese are not 'devaluing' their currency, as Trump says over and over again on television. The value of the renminbi today is more than 25 percent higher against the dollar than it was a decade ago.

That's simply a fact, I tell Stone. It is also a fact that Trump's recent description of Walker's record in Wisconsin was incorrect in just about every way. Wasn't Graham right when he said that on policy Trump is "a mile wide and an inch deep?" That not only does he not know enough, but worse, he doesn't know what he doesn't know?

Stone sighs. "Look, it's a big-picture thing. He knows what he wants to do. He knows how to delegate. He knows how to lead."

He goes on to say that he thinks voters like the fact that, in part to honor a commitment to his son Eric, who helps manage the family's golf business, Donald flew off to Scotland for a couple of days at the end of July to be at the Women's British Open, which was being held at a course Trump owns. This, he says mockingly, at a time when all the other candidates were "holed up in a room trying to master the arcana of budget policy."

"OK," I say, "fair enough."

But then comes this: "You know," Stone says, "I worked for a guy they used to say the same



thing about. That he didn't know enough."

Oh no, I'm thinking. Please don't do it, Roger! Please don't compare Trump with...

"That he was just an actor."

Oh God.

"And he turned out to be the most consequential president of our lifetime."

Yes, folks, Donald Trump is the new Ronald Reagan. You read it here first.

JUST TELL ME WHY

THE OTHER thing that I wondered about before seeing Donald Trump again was why. Why in the world at age 69 and with a few billion dollars in the bank would you seek to be president? Does Trump really want the job? Hasn't he seen how much the last two

men in the Oval Office, both much younger men than he, aged over two terms? The job is a *bitch*. And a long campaign will inevitably unearth a lot of stuff Trump can't possibly want to revisit: the bankruptcies, the many lawsuits. The fact that—precisely because New York real estate, not to mention the casino business, is vicious—he has made a lot of enemies.

He's not going to win the nomination just doing live interviews with Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly from the lobby of his building.

When I ask Trump why, he says simply that the country "is going down the tubes, and I'm sick about it. And I'm sick of these politicians. So why not? Why not run?"

He sees that I'm bit puzzled, skeptical maybe, so he says, "What do you think, Bill? Do you think I can win?"

"Honestly, Donald," I say, "on the plane over here from China I would have told you no. But what the hell do I know? I live in Shanghai."

He laughs, and then says, "Well, we're going to find out, aren't we?" ■

**A LONG CAMPAIGN WILL
INEVITABLY UNEARTH A LOT
OF STUFF TRUMP CAN'T
POSSIBLY WANT TO REVISIT.**





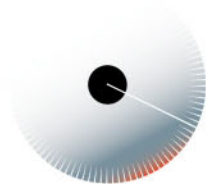


JUST
SHUT
UP

IF
YOU
WANT
TO
REWIRE
YOUR
BRAIN,
*TRY
BEING
QUIET*

BY ZOE SCHLANGER
ILLUSTRATION BY SAM WEBER





IT WAS 5:30 IN THE MORNING on my third day of silent meditation when I noticed something in me take a sharp turn left.

I was groggy, frustrated by my inability to sit still and hungry for the breakfast that was still an hour off. I got up from the spot on the floor of my bedroom where I had been attempting to meditate and walked outside, to the new-growth woods behind the residential quarters at the Vipassana Meditation Center in Shelburne, Massachusetts. It was springtime, and the outdoors seemed spring-loaded with potential: The buds on the trees were sharp little things, and hundreds of fuzzy fiddleheads dotted the forest floor, curled snug.

I walked down a little looping path that stopped unsatisfyingly soon; “course boundary” signs curtailed my meandering to an area of the woods the size of a soccer field. Exercise, like so many things here, was not permitted.

For the past three days, a brass bell had woken me up at 4 a.m., along with the 129 others who had committed to this 10-day silent saga. We meditated, with guidance, for roughly 10 hours a day, broken up by meals and “free time,” which was free only in the sense that we weren’t meditating. We weren’t allowed to read or write, speak to one another, make communicative gestures or even look at one another in the eye. So we all paced the small loop in the woods, staring at trees, careful not to acknowledge one another’s existence. No nodding, no smiling.

During free time after lunch, I walked outside to find a cluster of women standing in the courtyard stock-still, eyes closed, faces tilted toward the sun, looking posed for alien abduction. One woman wore a Nirvana band T-shirt, presumably unironically. I began to giggle aloud, a major transgression, but I couldn’t help it. It all seemed so ridiculous. What the hell was I doing here? There’s no way, I thought, that this silent sitting around, this utter lack of mental stimulation, could be benefitting my brain. I briefly entertained the idea that this was all one massive 2,500-years-running placebo effect. I went over my last few days in my mind. I looked back at the cluster of women. Is this what it felt like to be brainwashed? Was I mid-brainwashing? Would someone being brainwashed question whether she was being brainwashed? No, I finally told myself, I wasn’t being brainwashed; I

was being silly. I turned away and stood outside in the sun for a while, in silence, and resigned myself to the idea of another week of this.

MY BRAIN IS SOFT PLASTIC

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, the human quest for self-optimization has collided with improving mobile technology to birth more than 100,000 health apps for smartphones. The mobile market research firm Research2Guidance estimates that mHealth apps, as they’re called, will be a \$26 billion industry by 2017.

Every waking (and sleeping) hour of your corporeal existence can be quantified. Your data can be as granular as you like, and you can take it further: You can track your eating habits with a fork that vibrates when you’re eating too quickly. Or put on a headband that will watch your brainwaves and play “loud, disruptive wind” noises if your mind wanders. Or strap on a device that will zap you when you aren’t sitting up straight.

In theory, having more real-time data about our bodies means we can better mold them according to our will. But in practice, it may not be working out that way. Dr. Des Spence, a general practitioner in Glasgow, Scotland, argued in the *British Medical Journal* last year that constant self-tracking turns healthy people into “neurotics.” “The truth,” he said, “is that these apps and devices are untested and unscientific, and they will open the door of uncertainty. Make no mistake: Diagnostic uncertainty ignites extreme anxiety in people.” Other popular iPhone apps claim to make you smarter. Brain-training games hinge on the belief that completing working memory “training tasks” can effectively teach the brain to function better in the real world. But research in the last few years has shredded that claim. Zachary Hambrick, a psychology professor at Michigan State University, worked with a team that published a paper in 2013 showing no evidence whatsoever that brain games improved intelligence. “The only solid result is that working memory training makes people better at the working memory training task itself,” he says. And who cares about becoming an expert at practicing?

Take another step beyond consumer products and you’ll find the burgeoning field of DIY biohacking. Transcranial direct-current stimulation is at the center of the movement. It involves strapping electrodes to one’s head and running a low dose of electricity through the brain. The therapeutic potential appears enormous; early research into TDCS suggests it may prove useful for treating a range of mental health issues like depression and bipolar disorder, quitting smoking and easing chronic pain, among a multitude of



other potential applications. For the DIY crowd, a central appeal is neuroenhancement—the potential to prompt clear-headed focus and amp up cognitive functions such as reading or learning a new skill.

But these interventions are temporary and rely on

NO STRESS ZONE: A recent study found experienced meditators have reduced levels of pro-inflammatory genes and recover faster from a stressful situation.

+

eight-week period; those in the mindful-meditation group were able to sustain their focus longer than both other groups and reported feeling less stressed during the test.

The brain changes functionally and structurally all the time, taking in lessons from and responding to the stimulus of daily life. Neuroscientists call this neuroplasticity. But what if you could determine the way your brain changes? For years, Richard Davidson, a neuroscientist and



devices and paid services. They are also relatively unproven. What if the ultimate neuroenhancing biohack is 2,500 years old, requires no equipment and costs nothing?

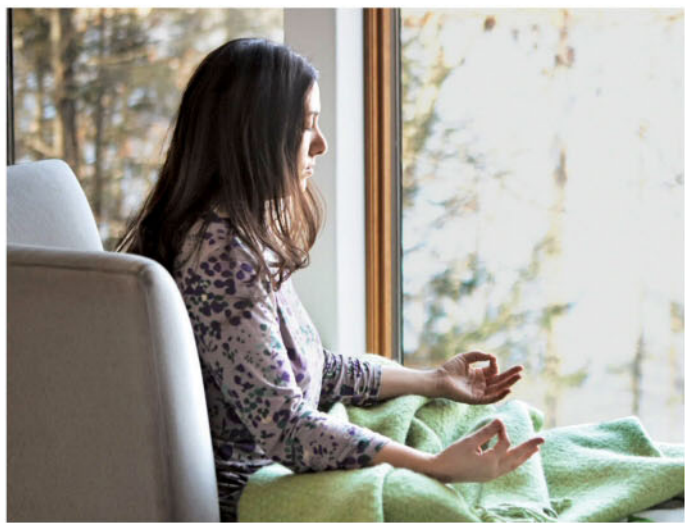
A few years ago, a computer scientist and a neuroscientist at the University of Arizona enrolled 45 human-resource managers in a trial: One-third of them took eight weeks of mindfulness-based meditation training, one-third took eight weeks of body relaxation training and one-third had no training at all. All three groups were given “stressful multitasking” tests before and after the



**WHAT IF THE ULTIMATE
NEUROENHANCING
BIOHACK IS 2,500 YEARS
OLD, NO EQUIPMENT
REQUIRED?**

founder of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, a research hub that studies the effect of meditation on the brain, has referred to the neurological effects of meditation as “rewiring the brain.”

“*Rewiring* is not a scientific term, but it captures something truthful and important, I think, about what may be occurring,” he says. “Neuroplasticity happens wittingly and unwittingly. And most of the time, it happens unwittingly. Most of the time, our brains are constantly being shaped by forces around us of which we are really not



aware or dimly aware.” But research suggests that meditators (he’s one) are able to intentionally guide that process. “The research indicates...we can actually influence the functional and structural changes in our brain.”

Research into mindfulness meditation has exploded in recent years. In 2014, 535 papers were published on the topic, according to the American Mindfulness Research Association. In 1980, there were just three. One study found that meditators appear to lose less gray matter over time than their non-meditating counterparts. Regular

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**A CLUSTER OF
WOMEN STOOD IN THE
COURTYARD STOCK-
STILL, EYES CLOSED,
FACES TILTED TOWARD
THE SUN, LOOKING
POSED FOR ALIEN
ABDUCTION.**

meditation, another study suggests, may “reduce the cognitive decline associated with normal aging.”

One study, from 2012, found that long-term meditators may develop more gyrification, or “folding,” of the cortex, which is associated with faster mental processing—and the more years a person meditates, the higher the degree of folding. Another study found evidence of increased thickness in the prefrontal cortex and right anterior insula, areas of the brain associated with attention and awareness of sensations and emotions in oneself and others.

Another found meditators who had practiced five years or more had “significantly larger volumes” of gray matter in the hippocampus, an area crucial to memory and learning. It’s possible, the researchers wrote, that the differences constituted “practice-induced alterations” to how quickly the region generated new neurons. Regular meditation, in other words, might help you grow more brain.

THE ADDICTION FIX

THERE’S ONE TECHNIQUE that seems especially promising. Vipassana is the Buddhist meditation technique on which the now wildly popular Westernized concept of “mindfulness” is based. The word *Vipassana* roughly translates from the ancient Pali language of Buddhist scriptures to “seeing things as they really are.” Henepola Gunaratana, an influential Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, described Vipassana once as “looking into something with clarity and precision, seeing each component as distinct and separate, and piercing all the way through so as to perceive the most fundamental reality of that thing.”

More than anything else, Vipassana meditation is about training the brain to quiet down—to not react on impulse alone. You might think you’re not impulsive, but the next time a fly lands on your neck, watch how fast you swat it—probably before your mind has had a chance to notice the bug’s existence at all. I have a similar hair-trigger response to a Gchat chime. These sorts of knee-jerk reactions extend into the emotional realm. When something negative happens, or when we crave something, be it a cigarette or the approval of a peer, we react without thinking. And that creates habit patterns that ensure the mind will react in the same way the next time a similar scenario arises.

Here’s where meditation begins to show itself as a biohacking marvel. Learning how to interrupt one’s reaction pattern—and then doing that over and over—can reshape behavior. And if behavior is changing, “then the brain is changing,” says Katie Witkiewitz, a clinical psychology researcher and associate professor at the University of New Mexico. As a Ph.D. student at the University of Washington, she’d been part of a team led by Alan Marlatt and Sarah Bowen studying the potential for Vipassana meditation to cure addiction. The first trial took place in 2001, with low-security prisoners in a rehabilitation center in Seattle. The medical director, Lucia Meijer, had been on a Vipassana course and wanted to see whether what worked



SILENCE IS OLDEN: Vipassana meditation techniques, thought to be over 2,500 years old, are the basis of “mindfulness” movements in the Western world.

for her could also help her patients. She turned a building into a retreat center and invited Witkiewitz’s team to study the outcome. “It was amazing,” Witkiewitz recalls. Six months after release, the formerly incarcerated people who had participated in a 10-day meditation course had higher rates of recovery than those who were enrolled in standard rehab treatment. Their mental health was also improving more than that of peers who didn’t go through the meditation classes. It wasn’t a randomized study, but the results were enough to prompt more research.

Threerandomizedmedicaltrialsfollowedinwhichpeople suffering from various addictions enrolled in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programs, modeled on a secularized version of Vipassana (no stories about the life of the Buddha). The results were great. Meditation led to “significant reductions in drug use, significant reductions in heavy drinking, significant improvement in mental health, significant reductions in cravings,” says Witkiewitz.

The crux of MBSR is learning to pause when one ordinarily wouldn’t, observe what’s happening in one’s body and then move forward. “It’s something we’re calling the ‘sober breathing space,’” says Witkiewitz. “So many people with addictions are reaching, reaching, reaching

for the next way to get high or the next way to avoid what they’re thinking.” The meditation gives them a method to pay attention to whatever emotions they are experiencing—even if they are negative ones like shame and self-hatred—and to tolerate them until they pass. “What we’re seeing happening is that for individuals whose brains have just been wired to be on autopilot from years of addiction, the ability to take a moment and pause—it’s potentially almost like rewiring the addicted brain.”

SOUNDS LIKE CHRISTINA AGUILERA

I FOUND OUT ABOUT VIPASSANA in the winter of 2014, in the midst of a breakup of the sort that upends every part of one’s life. I was hungry for anything that might stabilize me when a cousin came back from a Vipassana retreat exuding an enviable sense of calm. She listened quietly as I babbled over brunch about the minutiae of my relationship drama and ticked off all the ways I needed to radically change my life. She said the retreat taught her to “be OK with what’s going on now.” I shriveled a little. Was my distress that obvious?

I had never meditated before, but I signed up for the waitlist. The retreat, like all Vipassana programs, was free, funded by donations from and run by a rotating cast



LET IT DIE: It turns out that all those mind and body tracking apps on your phone might be doing more harm than good; the best biohacking technique out there might be to simply shut it all down.

of former students. While I waited, I watched “mindful living”—based on Vipassana traditions—have its media moment. Trend piece after trend piece chronicled the rise of meditation apps and Silicon Valley startup offices incorporating mindfulness meditation. A woman in Los Angeles even got a write-up in *The New York Times* for opening a “drybar for meditation.” Six months after enrolling, I got an email notifying me I was off the waitlist.

By the third morning of meditating, my mind was still flailing wildly, jumping from one thought to the next to avoid being quieted. I felt as though I were being dragged around by a petulant child. The more I desired a quiet mind, the more wildly flamboyant my distractions became. As soon as I’d managed to banish the choruses of the last five songs I’d played on Spotify before the retreat began, up came a few bars from Christina Aguilera’s Spanish-language rendition of “Come on Over.” I’d memorized the song in a high school Spanish class, and though today my mind could call up only half the chorus and one verse, it did so with vigor, repeating the bars ad infinitum, along with a montage of banal but absurdly detailed teen memories. The posters on the wall of that Spanish class. The serving containers in the cafeteria.

Then my thoughts turned abstract. With eyes still closed, I focused on the dark outline of my eye sockets on the inside of my eyelids, thinking that would tamp down

the images. Bad move. Within moments, swirls of blue and yellow gyrated around the vague form of two ovals. I was distressed but kind of impressed; resisting quietude with a psychedelic light show is downright slick, really.

As calmly as I could, I pushed the light show aside too. At this point, I was regarding my galloping thoughts with detached amusement. There they were, charging around, without me. What a ridiculous spectacle. Slowly, the frenetic clamor dimmed. And after that, the meditation got easier.

THE WORLD, UNIMAGINABLE

TWO DAYS LATER, I walked outside. My morning meditation had gone relatively well, I thought, and I felt calm and concerned only with what was happening in the present. I saw a bird’s nest cradled in a crook of the large, leafless bush about my height a few yards from the door. As I leaned in to peer into the nest, the bare branches filled my field of vision. A second passed as my eyes adjusted to the sunlight and focused on the empty bowl of the nest. As soon as they did, dozens of fat black ants came into focus too, scuttling up and down the branches in every corner of my field of vision. I was watching the ants without shifting my gaze from the bird’s nest. The whole scene, peripheral vision included, was unnervingly crisp. It was like watching a scene in Imax, every corner in laser focus.

For the remainder of the retreat, walking in the woods was a sensory field day. I could see the fuzz on the slowly

LEFT: VALERIA MAMELI/FLICKR OPEN/GETTY;
RIGHT: VALERIANO DIDOMENICO/SWISS-IMAGE.CH/NEWSCOM

unfurling fiddleheads from yards away. For the first time in my life, I heard the dead leaves on the forest floor settling on one another. It sounded exactly like rain falling on trees. One afternoon, I watched a nuthatch land on a tree trunk. Its gray-brown body wasn't bigger than a child's fist, but I could hear its talons make contact with the bark. It sounded like a puppy's nails skittering on a hardwood floor. Nearby, water not more than an inch deep moved languidly along a ditch. I could hear that too. Others who have been on a Vipassana retreat tell similar stories about sensory explosions. "Everything was just more vibrant," Witkiewitz says. "Foods tasted better."

"I use reading glasses," Davidson says. "[During retreats] I noticed that I was able to read things that I otherwise would have required glasses to read, without glasses. The effects didn't persist, but they were definitely present."

When I got home, New York City was briefly unmanageable. I felt daunted by the task of conversation, and socializing was unappealing. But within a few days, I'd readjusted to the speaking world, and I started noticing little, perhaps permanent, changes. There's a man who lives in my building whose every move carries such a strong air of entitlement that it's palpable when we share the elevator. Sometimes, during these rides, he'll make some remark about my appearance that leaves me steaming; after the retreat, I realized I didn't have to give a shit. When I faced my morning subway commute, I was less filled with the sense of existential malaise that used to come when I swarmed up the L train platform stairs wedged between two separate sets of shoulders, my forehead plunking against the backpack of the person ahead of me over and over like a metronome. Now it didn't seem so bad. All these people were just trying to get to work too.

My impulse to fill pauses in conversations was toned down, and time slowed down a bit too, because I was paying more attention to things as they happened. My typical obsessive interest in thinking about what the hell I was

going to do with the rest of my life also seemed reduced, along with my equally large drive to rehash recent social interactions and pick them apart for errors on my end. Perhaps biggest of all, the animosity toward my ex evaporated.

I decided to test whether what I was feeling would translate to a real-life interaction, so I arranged for us to get coffee a week later; the first meeting since our telenovela-style split. As we chatted, I prodded myself mentally, searching for the familiar hurt and ill will. It wasn't there.

Learning to let negativity go sounds Hallmark-level trite, but there it was.

There's more. Before the retreat, Mathias Basner, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine who studies sleep and biological rhythms, suggested I get my thyroid and cortisol levels tested before and after the retreat. Since both can be tied to stress, he hypothesized they might shift in a setting designed to train calmness. So I went to my doctor for blood work. Somewhat conveniently, for the purposes of my little experiment, my levels for both of those hormones were out of whack. A week before I left for the retreat, my thyroid levels were slightly abnormal, and my levels of corti-

sol, more popularly known as the "stress hormone," were four points above the upper threshold for normal, "double what I'd like to see for you," my doctor said. Two days after the retreat ended, I went back to the doctor's office. My thyroid levels had dropped one full point. According to my doctor, it would take "at least six weeks" on thyroid medication to get that result. And my cortisol level fell almost 10 points; it was now squarely within the normal range. That would ordinarily "take months" on a stress-reducing supplement, the doctor told me. He sounded impressed.

At the retreat, the teacher warned over and over not to look for major shifts in our lives when we got home. Any small changes—food that tastes a little better, the family interaction that seems a little less excruciating—are remarkable enough. But that constellation of little changes seemed just evidence, really, of a realization at once quotidian and grand: With continuous effort, I could change the way my mind worked. The sense of control over my brain and, by extension, the ways I approach the world hit me hard the moment I first learned to temporarily shut up the part of my mind that frothed over with pop songs. I could decouple, however briefly, my sense of self from the meat sack of my mind and body. And that decoupling gave me the ability to actually control where that meat sack was headed next. **N**



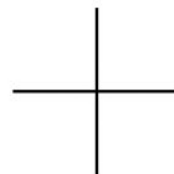
+ **IN YOUR HEAD:** Richard Davidson, center, is the founder of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds and a world leader in the study of how meditation affects the human brain.

● ● ●
**REGULAR MEDITATION
MIGHT HELP YOU
GROW MORE BRAIN.**





NEW WORLD



HEARING

INNOVATION

PRESERVATION

GEOGRAPHY

SPACE

WILDLIFE

GOOD SCIENCE

GOOGLE'S AIR-SNIFFING CARS

A new mapping project will tell you exactly where you can safely breathe

+ PLOTTING POLLUTION: "If you're a mother of an asthmatic child, you could plan your day using this kind of information," says Karin Tuxen-Bettman, who leads Google Earth's partnership with Aclima.

LIVING IN a city is like playing air-quality roulette all day long. The air you breathe on your drive to work is different from what you're sucking in while walking to get your midmorning coffee. Air pollution can vary significantly from neighborhood to neighborhood, depending on factors like proximity to parks and trees, topography and clustering of congestion hot spots. Timing also matters: Pollution varies widely throughout the day, according to factors like weather and human activity. Air you breathe in the a.m. may be drastically different from air you breathe at dusk.

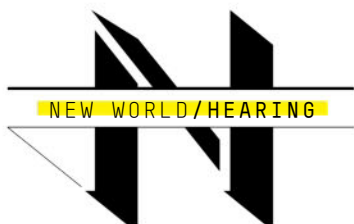
But what if you could see a picture of your city's daily air pollution along your route the way you check the weather? Last month, Google announced it was partnering with Aclima, a San Francisco-based company that designs environmental sensor networks, to outfit some Google Street View cars with sensors that track air pollution in real time. The technology can take in data on several pollutants: nitrogen dioxide, nitric oxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, methane, black carbon, particulate matter and

volatile organic compounds. Chronic exposure can cause issues from asthma and cardiovascular disease to low birth weight and cognitive delays.

Last year, a test-spin in Denver was deemed a success: The Environmental Protection Agency provided scientific expertise and corroborating data from its own network of stationary air-quality monitors, confirming that the mobile system worked. Now the air-sniffing cars are coming to the Bay Area in California, and Aclima says it hopes to expand to other cities in the near future.

In cities where pollution is a daily concern, the project could have a significant impact. Take Vernal, for example, a small Utah town plagued by ozone pollution and abnormally high rates of infant death. Some residents suspect that the air pollution is at fault. They cite the area surrounding one intersection in town that sees an exceptionally high degree of truck traffic as being a particular hot spot for risk. The pollution-mapping project could inform speculation with data, warning the public and helping municipal governments effectively address problems. **N**

BY
ZOE SCHLANGER
@zoeschlanger



DISRUPTIVE

WHAT BIG EARS YOU HAVE!

Soon you'll hear like Superman, and be able to tune out that barking dog

EVER SINCE STEVE Austin displayed his bionic powers on *The Six Million Dollar Man*, we've been talking about adding body parts that make us superhuman. These days, the most likely body part to get upgraded by mass-market technology is our ears. Our eyes lost out when Google Glass proved to be about as useful as a Segway, and almost as embarrassing to own.

Compared with boosters for legs, hands and nose, augmented hearing is closest to becoming commonplace. This could first change the nature of live music and later affect much bigger things, like cities, language and relationships. Just wait until you can tune out your spouse with augmented hearing earbuds—like hitting mute when Donald Trump comes on TV—and set your audio world so all you hear is the doorbell. (Because you won't want to miss the pizza delivery.)

Before the end of the year, startup Doppler Labs plans to come out with a promising product called Here—oversized earbuds, about the size of a quarter, meant to give you control over live sounds. They don't play Spotify songs; instead, they filter and alter the thrum of the real world around you. The early versions will have volume control and some noise cancellation, so you can put them in your ears and make city sounds less harsh while boosting conversations so they come through loud and clear. One Here setting is "Baby Suppress," which sounds like birth control but is meant to squash the sound of the crying kid behind you on a cross-country flight.

For an aging population that shredded their



cochlea at Ramones concerts, augmented hearing buds could do some of the work of hearing aids while seeming cooler and costing one-tenth as much. The first Here buds will be less than \$300; hearing aids go for anywhere between \$2,000 and \$7,000.

Doppler is initially aiming Here at live music

BY
KEVIN MANEY
[@kmaney](#)

EARS TO YOU:
Augmented hearing will turn up the things you want to hear (that bass player) and turn down the noise you want to ignore.



lovers. CEO Noah Kraft, a musician and audiophile, was frustrated that the music sounded different in various areas of a venue. Here buds will allow a user to adjust volume, bass and effects such as reverb to customize a concert. Before long, Kraft says, the band's sound chief could send settings to every Here bud in the room so everyone wearing them has the same optimized experience.

Augmented hearing buds could be the biggest thing to hit live music since electric amplification, which changed the very nature of music, from orchestras and big bands to small combos playing through microphones and amps. Once everyone in a venue is wearing augmented ears, artists will be able to rethink the way the music gets to our brains. Maybe every member of the band will play in a different corner of the room, allowing audience members to wander from one musician to the other, seeing the performance intimately while still hearing the sound all perfectly mixed together.

"Our hope is that Here will open up a new paradigm for the concert experience and for live listening," Kraft told *Rolling Stone*.

But Doppler and others working on augmented hearing don't plan to stop at music. Doppler has a vision for "a computer, speaker and microphone in every ear"—a nod to Microsoft's old goal of a computer on every desk—and predicts that in 10 years people will wear these 24 hours a day. The company's grand plan includes mapping every point on earth for sound, so your buds could automatically optimize what you hear. Imagine these buds with GPS, knowing that if you're home at 2 a.m., it should adjust to cancel the snoring next to you and the neighbor's barking dog. Or if you're on a hike in the backwoods, it should amplify any distant sounds of a bear charging your way.

Augmented hearing could change the economics of a major city, where noise has an impact on where people choose to live and work. Heck, if you could wear noise-canceling buds all the time, you could live under a jet runway approach that's next to a bus depot.

While Doppler seems furthest along, it's not alone in chasing these ideas. You can already buy sound-augmenting apps that use your smartphone as the mic and filter, pushing the altered sounds to regular earbuds or headphones. Ear Spy, for instance, markets its app as "the latest in personal espionage," letting you tune in a conversation from across the room. A group of

Finnish researchers recently published a study on what they call the "pseudo-acoustic environment," which they describe as "a modified representation of the real acoustic environment around a user." And high-end hearing aid makers have continually built more acoustic filtering into their devices. GN ReSound Linx has a mode meant for restaurants that turns down music and background noise and focuses on conversation. Such hearing aids, though, cost thousands

LANGUAGE BARRIERS WOULD DISAPPEAR—AND WITH THEM, MAYBE ANY NEED TO TEACH FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

of dollars and are marketed as medical products, not consumer gadgets.

One brilliant aspect of augmented ears is that a huge chunk of the population already wears things in their ears, and earbuds don't draw attention or announce that you're a geek. They don't creep out people around you. And an aging but still vain demographic that needs help but won't wear a "hearing aid" (estimates are that only 20 percent of people who need hearing aids use one) would more likely get cool earbuds that do much of the same work. "The ear is such a logical place [for a device] because we've been wearing wearable tech on our ears since the Walkman," Doppler Executive Chairman Fritz Lanman told *Wired*.

Beyond Doppler's vision, some of the propositions for augmented hearing get pretty wild. Once you have a computer in your ear, it could do a lot of things your ears could never do. One idea is instant translation. Automated language translation is getting better all the time. Combine that with a sound processor and it could catch Chinese coming in and send English into your ears. Language barriers would disappear—and with them, maybe any need to teach foreign languages.

Another idea is to allow us to hear wavelengths never meant for our ears. Color is a wavelength we see but can't hear, but what if you could hear green? Imagine the impact on the colorblind. Or what if you could hear infrared, essentially letting you see in the dark through your ears?

This stuff is likely to happen. With Google Glass and the stalled Apple Watch and other wearables, there's no there there. Soon, however, we'll have a Here here. **N**

ART WITH FUR

Museums don't know what to do with their very cool but very old (and arsenic-laced) dioramas

ALIENS CHOSE DEVILS Tower in Wyoming as their landing site in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. President Teddy Roosevelt made it America's first national monument, and later a taxidermist for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York visited the spot to collect mule deer specimens for a habitat diorama.

The diorama, completed in the 1940s, is now one of at least 117 at the museum, and Michael Novacek's favorite display. "I can almost feel the air. It's so perfect. The little amount of haze, the clouds floating by. It's so transporting," he says during a recent visit, without looking away from the diorama. A deer stands perched with its majestic antlers framing the Devils Tower rock formation painted in the background. Another deer sniffs the sloping ground behind a needley shrub. Novacek, the museum's senior vice president and provost for science, folds his arms, shakes his head and says, "Just amazing."

Since museums began constructing them more than a century ago, habitat dioramas have carried millions of visitors to other times and places. The mule deer display triggers such an emotional response from Novacek because it reminds him of when he was a graduate student, studying extinct mammals near Devils Tower. Not that one needs a personal connection to feel its power. A few display cases away, visitors are practically climbing over one another to get a better look at the jaguars. There's a



BY
MAX KUTNER
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chorus of *whoas* and *oh my Gods*, and one kid says with awe, “It looks so real!”

Dioramas arose in the late 1800s, largely out of a desire to return to nature after the Industrial Revolution. “These are what you might call the earliest version of virtual reality,” says Stephen Quinn, who recently retired as senior project manager and longtime diorama artist at the AMNH. The displays consist of taxidermied animals, foreground props and artfully painted panoramic backgrounds. More than just works of art, dioramas are true to science; for decades, artists and scientists went into the field to collect specimens and their surroundings and replicate them exactly as they appeared. “This sense of place and this sense of reality and a personal encounter is so strong that they are a real powerful medium for teaching science,” Quinn says.

The form peaked around the 1920s, and interest began waning after World War II. Today, dioramas are as endangered as many of the animals they portray. Since TV sets entered living rooms, and with so many subsequent technological innovations, natural history museums have agonized over what to do with their increasingly antiquated-seeming habitat dioramas. Willard Boyd, former president of Chicago’s Field Museum of Natural History, wrote in 1999 that dioramas “are often viewed by today’s visitors as a dead zoo located in a dark tunnel.”

Museum specialists call it the “diorama dilemma,” and they’ve struggled to solve it for decades. Some museums have supercharged their century-old displays with gaudy interactive and multimedia features. Others have left them alone and allowed them to fall into disrepair. The worst offenders have scrapped the old dioramas, pillaging them for parts and banishing their remains to storage or garbage dumps.

There are examples from all across the country. The California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco closed in 2003 and reopened in a Renzo Piano–designed building in 2008 with only one of the two diorama halls surviving the move. Around that time, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., closed two diorama halls and reopened them with video screens, interactive features and stand-alone specimens where the dioramas had been. “From the beginning, I didn’t like the decision to dismantle these exhibits,” says Frank Greenwell, former chief taxidermist and conservator at the Smithsonian, where he worked from 1957 to 1999. “I retired rather than be a part of dismantling these dioramas. I was not alone with this opinion.”

When the Grand Rapids Public Museum in

Michigan moved to a new building in 1994, it abandoned many of its dioramas, locking them inside its old facility like a mausoleum. They remained largely untouched until 2012, when the museum granted an artist, Alois Kronschlaeger, permission to remove the glass and manipulate the displays for an installation. Curators warned him that the animals contained arsenic. “It’s almost like [being] a grave digger,” he says. “You open up a tomb that was closed, in this case, for five decades.”

And as part of a restructuring in the 1980s and ’90s, the Field Museum in Chicago hired “exhibit developers” and children’s museum experts to oversee scientifically trained curators. The dioramas survived, albeit with added animal noise sound effects, but the shifting focus to more “edutainment” displays divided staff and made headlines. “The natural history museum as a unique kind of cultural institution—as a place for aesthetic and historical appreciation—has been lost,” said a 2009 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

The public’s view of dioramas has changed, too. In an article titled “Teddy Bear Patriarchy,” published in the journal *Social Text* in the mid-1980s, feminist scholar Donna Haraway criticized dioramas as trophy rooms for rich, white, Western men. Native American groups have called for the removal of certain “human” dioramas, including at the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History. And at the

“THESE ARE WHAT
YOU MIGHT CALL THE
EARLIEST VERSION
OF VIRTUAL REALITY.”

Oakland Museum of California, a 2008 study found that 11 percent of visitors questioned said they felt uncomfortable gawking at dead animals.

The “diorama dilemma” is now unfolding at the Bell Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota. Last year, Quinn, who has worked as a consultant there, sent an urgent message to friends and colleagues after he learned that the museum would be moving to a new location and chopping up some of its century-old dioramas for rearranging and leaving others behind. “With all my heart, I believe this plan, if acted out, is a grave mistake, and

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: Dioramas were once the big draw at natural history museums, but today visitors want something livelier and digital.





that history will look back on this action as a great and tragic loss,” he wrote. The museum had constructed its building specifically to house those dioramas. In a Facebook post, he likened the plan to ripping Michelangelo’s frescoes out of the Sistine Chapel.

Bell Museum Director Susan Weller says staying put is not an option; the building is outdated, lacks visitor parking and is far from curator offices. Installing proper air conditioning alone would cost \$20 million, Weller says, which “does nothing for the visitor experience.” Moving means that more visitors can access the dioramas and experience them in better conditions. “There are people who look at [dioramas] as a dead, boring zoo, and it hurts when they say that,” she says. “But I have to give it to them. The way they’re currently displayed, they do not speak to the 21st century audience.”

The Bell Museum will break ground on a \$57.5 million facility next summer and open in 2018. Eleven of the 16 large dioramas will likely make the move. They are still deciding exactly how they will look when they arrive, but curator Don Luce says, “There will be some probably very simple experiential elements that will be added to that area in front of the diorama that will give people a sense of being in the picture,” such as rocks or antlers available to touch, and “a sound environment.”

But there are some signs that just maybe the curators are wrong. In April, Chicago’s Field Museum crowdfunded \$155,000 in a single month to construct its first new diorama in at least 25 years, using animals mounted in 1896. Plus, climate change and environmental threats present opportunities to make dioramas more relevant. After all, some of the real habitats that the AMNH dioramas depict, such as coral reefs and parts of Alaska, look much different today. The Oakland Museum finished repurposing its dioramas last fall in ways that “move beyond depictions of idealized nature,” a senior exhibition developer has written, and “represent the enormous impact that our species has on the world.” Taxidermy is also experiencing a comeback—this spring’s World Taxidermy & Fish Carving Championships had 571 entries from 48 U.S. states and 14 countries.



+ BRUSH WITH GREATNESS: Maintaining dioramas requires an artist’s touch, as well as a vast knowledge of the animal kingdom; recently retired AMNH project manager Stephen Quinn, seen here, had both.

“With computer interactive display in a natural history museum, you can do the same sort of things on your laptop at home,” Quinn says. “The thing that natural history museums provide that is such a unique experience is showing you the real thing.... That kind of personal encounter cannot be experienced through modern media.”

Those who are worried about the future of dioramas should visit the Hall of African Mammals at the AMNH on a rainy summer day. The grand two-story room has dark marble walls; a ring of wooden benches surrounds a crowd of

HE LIKENED THE PLAN TO RIPPING MICHELANGELO’S FRESCOES OUT OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL.

elephants at the center. Kids on field trips in matching shirts stream from case to case, breaking from the hands of their assigned buddies to gesture excitedly at the giraffe, its head rising above the display window frame. A young boy pounds his chest, and his reflection aligns with a nearly 100-year-old gorilla doing the same. For an instant, the diorama appears to come to life. Then the boy shouts, “Next!” and leads his herd toward the nearby Serengeti. **N**

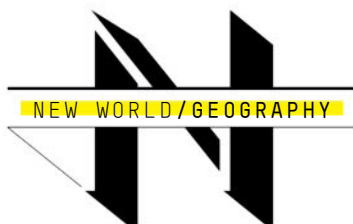
HELP SAVE THE 'WOW'

These giants of the animal kingdom need help. Despite their strength and cunning they're no match for a poacher's rifle. For 50 years WWF has been securing protected areas worldwide, but these aren't enough to stop the killing. To disrupt the sophisticated criminal gangs supplying animal parts to lucrative illegal markets, we are working with governments to toughen law enforcement. We're also working with consumers to reduce the demand for unlawful wildlife products. Help us look after the world where you live at panda.org/50



Silverback Western lowland gorilla.

© NaturePL.com / T.J. Rich / WWF



LANDLUBBERS LIVE LONGER

The curious longevity of Americans living in the center of the country

IT'S A SUMMER Thursday, happy hour at Lee's Bar in downtown Rugby, North Dakota, and as millions of Americans prepare for a weekend at the beach, 54-year-old bartender Jeff Ekren doles out drinks and reveals a little piece of autobiography: "Never seen the ocean," says Ekren as he pours a shot of BlackBeard Spiced Rum for one old-timer. "It don't mean much to me."

Ekren's indifference to the sea is common in Rugby, a 3,000-person farming town 45 miles from the Canadian border. Rugby is the official geographic center of North America, which means it is approximately in the middle of the continent, and well over 1,000 miles from any ocean. Some residents joke that they can feel Earth pivoting around them.

For beach lovers, a life without the ocean might seem like a life not worth living. Consider the long arc of the idea that oceans enhance wellness. The ancient Greeks believed seawater preserved health, and the "thalassotherapy resorts" and "sea-bathing infirmaries" of 18th and 19th century France and Britain catered to the notion that the minerals in seawater had curative properties. More recently, in 2013, researchers at the University of Exeter Medical School published a study in the journal *Health & Place* that analyzed English census data and showed that individuals living near the coast reported significantly better health.

But residents of Rugby, and the northern Great Plains in general, appear to be a living contradiction. Not only are people here quite

healthy; they may be among the healthiest people in America. Data from a 2012 U.S. Census Bureau report show that of the 10 states with the greatest percentage of centenarians per population, six are in the Upper Midwest. And at the very top of the list is North Dakota.

"Here in the Upper Midwest, we don't have that relaxed, sunny Southern California or Southern Arizona mentality," says Iowa State University gerontologist Peter Martin. "You have to stay busy, so you have to be more disciplined, and finding ways to be busy and active is good for your body, good for your mind and good for longevity." Martin moved from Georgia to Iowa in part so he could study long-lived Upper Midwesterners.

Inez Blessum Thorstenson celebrated her 103rd birthday this past June. Thorstenson was born in Rugby in 1912—she still has vivid memories of the 1918 influenza pandemic. She has lived elsewhere in North Dakota and spent a brief stint in California, but most of her life has been in Rugby. Her parents lived into their 90s, and two of her brothers lived to be centenarians. "We have these Franciscan sisters in southern North Dakota who always live into their 90s and 100s," says Deb Hoffert, who does crafts with elderly patients like Thorstenson as a volunteer at Rugby's Heart of America Medical Center. "I don't know what's going on here. Maybe it's the prairie air?"

Oceans moderate temperatures, giving coastal towns milder winters and cooler summers. Areas

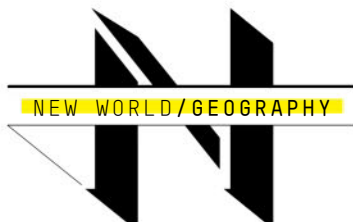


BY
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JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

GET CENTERED:
Thanks in part
to a climate that
fosters community,
the Upper Midwest
has an unusually
high percentage of
centenarians.



far from the sea tend to be meteorologically extreme. North Dakota gets blistering heat waves—the state’s hottest temperature, recorded in 1936, was 121 degrees—tornadoes and massive thunderstorms that can drop grapefruit-size hail. In winter, blizzards can last for days, and visibility can get so poor that you can’t see your hand in front of your face. The state’s coldest temperature, also recorded in 1936, was 60 degrees below zero. When fronts pass through, temperatures can rise or fall 80 degrees in one day.

A study Martin published in 2012 in the *Journal of Aging Research* examined the lifestyles of 152 Iowa centenarians in rural towns to determine if certain traits seemed to favor long life. What he found is that strong community-support networks, resilience and active mental and social lives—combined with the extreme climate and geography of the Upper Midwest—all played a part. “Because you are more isolated and more rural, you are left to your own devices, and support becomes more important,” says Martin. “If you are out in a snowstorm and get stuck, you need to have someone who helps you, and if people keep driving by, you aren’t going to make it very long.”

Another factor that may be contributing to the high percentage of centenarians on the Great Plains: People who can’t take the extreme weather and isolation leave. “When the first pioneers came here, the people who thought it was too cold or harsh...didn’t hang around too long,” says Martin. “What you are left with are people with this survivorship characteristic.”

Local artist Terry Jelsing was born in Rugby, bicycled to New Mexico to study fine art, attended the Institute for European Studies in Vienna and curated and directed the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, North Dakota. But he eventually realized that to find the inspiration his art required, he had to return to Rugby. “I kept looking for a place just like this,” says Jelsing, 60, as he strolls the grounds of his 60-acre farm, trailed by a terrier named Sophie. “There is something neutral about nowhere, and because of that, it becomes unique and exotic.”

On the farm is a 100-year-old red barn built with carved wood pegs instead of nails, in the old

Norwegian style, as well as a series of gardens and a tomahawk-throwing course. North Dakota-inspired artwork dots the property. Jelsing’s studio is a rehabbed granary, now occupied by his artwork and three cats. The studio sits on concrete piers, rising above the landscape like a boat. “In wintertime, it feels like you’re sailing,” says Jelsing. “Blizzards come, and you’re snowed in for three days—snow swirling, obfuscating shadows and trees. You can’t go anywhere, so you create your own world.”

Jelsing’s wife, Cathy, is a freelance journalist, and she says landing assignments in and around Rugby has been difficult. “If you’re a professional of any kind, it’s really hard to make a living in Rugby,” she says. “You basically have to go outside.” To make ends meet, she works as director of the town’s Prairie Village Museum and plays viola in the town’s 50-person symphony orchestra.

Across town, at the Heart of America Library, director Sheila Craun, a recent transplant from California, shares some of her discontents. “I miss the ocean!” she exclaims. “In Orange County, we spent the whole, entire summer going to the beach. My husband surfed and my son surfed, and we went to a dog beach just so our dog could come with us.”

Craun and her husband moved here because it was cheaper, and to escape Southern Califor-

“THERE IS SOMETHING NEUTRAL ABOUT NOWHERE, AND BECAUSE OF THAT IT BECOMES UNIQUE AND EXOTIC.”

nia’s crowds. Plus, her husband was offered a good job and had always wanted to live in the Midwest. (Their son stayed in California.) But she’s still getting used to the culture. “People here are so entwined with each other’s lives,” says Craun. “They knock on your door, and you’re like, ‘Why?’ In California, you come home and close your garage and close your door—no one talks to their neighbors.”

Of course, as Martin found, those Midwestern manners may be one of the reasons the region is home to some of the country’s oldest people. Take the example of someone who knows his neighbors’ habits so well that he notices one night the lights didn’t go off in a



ANYTOWN, USA:
The post office
building in Rugby,
North Dakota.
Rugby is generally
thought of as the
geographical
center of North
America.

nearby home and calls to see if everything is all right. Craun and other Upper Midwestern newcomers might see this as prying. But Martin points out that for folks in their 90s and 100s, who might fail to shut off a light because they have fallen or need medical attention, this type of solicitousness can keep them alive longer.

Living in an environment with clean air and water is also key to a long life. And up until recently, these are things most North Dakotans took as a given. But the use of hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) and horizontal drilling to mine oil from the Bakken Formation that is layered deep below western North Dakota's surface has brought a boom to the state—it's now No. 2 in oil production, after Texas—and more than

doubled the populations of some rural towns in the region. It's also begun to spoil the landscape and natural environment.

"There was a place out on the Badlands where I used to go to hunt mule deer," says Terry Jel-sing, referring to a section of western North Dakota famous for its rugged red and yellow buttes, and smack in the middle of the Bakken boom. "I would stand there on this wonderful open space and hear absolutely nothing. Now it's an intersection."

Back at Lee's Bar, happy hour is coming to an end, and so is Ekren's shift. While the ocean is not on his agenda for the weekend, the water is.

"When I get off work," he says with a grin, "I'm going to the lake." **N**





TED WOOD/AURORA PHOTOS

+ GONE GONZO:
Hunter S. Thompson,
photographed in
2005, relaxing at his
home office in Woody
Creek, Colorado.



DOWNTIME

LIFESTYLE

BOOKS

MOVIES

ART

SPORTS

TELEVISION

WARNING JELL-O SHOTS

Soon anyone can enjoy a gin-soaked breakfast at the former home of one Hunter S. Thompson

SUDDENLY, there was a terrible roar around us. Whaaaaa-reuuuuuh-whaa-wha-wha-wha. It was primal and screeching. But the sky didn't fill up with what looked like huge bats (to my great disappointment). I ran out of the car to the high wooden fence heavily barricaded with chicken wire to spy what was going on. And I heard my voice screaming: "Holy Jesus! What are these goddamn animals?"

Hunter S. Thompson prized his peacocks. So much so that the late, lamented author of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* once shot a maimed fox that got too close to a couple of them in his personal flock. The descendants of those birds are alive and well and living at Owl Farm in Woody Creek, Colorado, the homestead where Dr. Gonzo once wrote while chain-smoking Dunhills through gold-tipped cigarette holders.

Thompson, who sometimes used the alias Sebastian Owl, also liked to play with explosives at his 42.5-acre spread. He blew up a Jeep Wagoneer there after packing it with dynamite

and dousing it with gasoline. Then he used it for target practice for hours at a time.

He raised his son, Juan, there. He hosted Jack Nicholson in the 1980s and Johnny Depp in the '90s. He accidentally shot his assistant Deborah Fuller there in 2000. (She was only slightly wounded.) He and his second wife, Anita, honeymooned there in 2003. Two years later, he died in the kitchen after shooting himself in the head.

Recently, I bummed a ride from Aspen to Woody Creek. I wanted to talk to Anita, who still calls Owl Farm home. Next year, she hopes to open the place to the public as a part-time museum. Visitors, maybe five or fewer a day, will be allowed to book tours online. They'll be free; Hunter's illustrator friend Ralph Steadman set up a memorial fund to bankroll tours for Thompson-philes who pass Anita's vetting process. No souvenir shop, so don't get your hopes up for a Steadman coffee cup. And fans of *Fear and Loathing* may be disappointed to learn

BY
GOGO LIDZ
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there will be no on-site dispensary.

If all goes according to plan, you'll be able to sign up for the tour on the Gonzo Foundation website. Anita will fix you the same breakfast she always made for Hunter at 2 in the afternoon: grapefruit, scrambled eggs, juice, coffee, and fresh fruit suspended in Jell-O, with gin and Grand Marnier drizzled on top. After you've more or less digested this feast, Anita will lead you on a tour of the house and grounds.

The house is a two-story log cabin, with "many, many rooms," says Anita, adding that providing "a specific count is not advisable, as Hunter had some of them built off the grid." The rooms are jammed with books, art, albums, memorabilia and Hunter's words—his handwritten notes are everywhere. Visitors will be shown the barn, which houses a green Cadillac (Anita notes that the vehicle "still technically belongs to April and Lyle

Lovett") and a cockpit simulator. Hunter's fabled red shark convertible is in the garage. Off-limits: the bedroom, and areas where firearms are stored.

In addition to peacocks, Owl Creek is home to chickens, a German shepherd and two Siamese cats, Caesar and Pele. "The cats were Hunter's babies," Anita says. She built what she calls a stone "labyrinth" (a sort of rock crop-circle maze) on the spot from which Hunter's ashes were shot out of a cannon. "With fireworks," she recalls. "Hunter loved explosions."

More attractions await his fans in town, most notably Hunter's favorite haunt, the Woody Creek Tavern. The walls are still plastered with photos of him and "Thompson for Sheriff" posters from the 1970 Aspen election. (He wanted to change the name of the town to "Fat City," but he lost by 31 votes.)

Near the main house are signs that bear a

+
THE DOCTOR IS OUT: Though his infamous office has long since been converted, guests to Thompson's house will be able to see the writer's other obsessions—like his beloved peacocks, which roam the grounds.



Wizard of Oz line (“Nobody gets in to see the wizard, not nobody, not no how”) and Hunter’s motto (“It never got weird enough for me”). It got pretty weird at the farm, though, judging by a game of shoot-and-putt he played with the local sheriff: “He had my Ping Beryllium 9-iron, and I had his shotgun, and about 100 yards away, we had a linoleum green and a flag set up. He was pitching toward the green. And I was standing about 10 feet away from him, with the alley-sweeper. And my objective was to blow his ball off course, like a clay pigeon.”

When Hunter moved to Owl Farm in 1967, he wrote to broadcast journalist Charles Kuralt that he had “now fairly permanently sunk into this Woody Creek fortress” but that his checks were still bouncing. Around the same time, Thompson wrote two letters to Paul Krassner at *The Realist* magazine about the “flower-power creeps” who showed up “with all kinds of drugs.”

To this day, Anita says Hunter hajjis still sneak onto Owl Farm. “Hunter had a beautiful relationship with his readers,” she says, “but he shot at anybody who tried to trespass. Just warning shots, thank God.” Thompson used to perch by an open window in his “catbird seat” and fire into the air when anyone crossed the property line. Today, Anita calls the sheriff first, but has no compunction about following Hunter’s lead.

Anita says she’s probably the only person to ever get sober in the Owl Farm kitchen. Thirteen years ago, she decided to quit getting high and drinking (previously, she says, she had been keeping up with Hunter) to take care of her husband, whose health was deteriorating. “I was participating fully in a daily drug and alcohol lifestyle with Hunter,” Anita says. “After a year of living like that, I knew I needed to stop, or end up in rehab, or end up leaving Hunter.” Though she drinks an occasional martini with friends, she doesn’t smoke pot, which is now legal in Colorado. “I’m only barely smarter than my smartphone,” she says. “I like to keep it that way.”

Though Anita says she always intended to turn Owl Farm into a museum, until recently she didn’t even consider the possibility of showcasing her late husband’s belongings. “After Hunter died, it brought me comfort to not move anything,” she says. “It took me years to even move his toothbrush from the bathroom.” A year after the memorial service, she left Woody Creek for New York City, where she attended Columbia University. She received a B.A. in



American studies in 2009 and returned home intent on preserving her husband’s legacy.

Thompson’s friend Johnny Depp, who played him in both *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *The Rum Diary*, is helping Anita. While Thompson’s original manuscripts will not be on display, Anita recently sent 800 boxes of the Doctor’s writing to Depp, who “soon, with proper encouragement, will open those archives to scholars and Ph.D. students,” she says. Then again, literary scholarship never much interested Thompson. In a 2005 *Rolling Stone* story, Douglas Brinkley, a history professor at Rice University, remembered bringing students to Owl Farm. Thompson, Brinkley wrote, pulled

“HUNTER HAD A BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS READERS, BUT HE SHOT AT ANYBODY WHO TRIED TO TRESPASS.”

out a .45 and “in assembly-line fashion he had them—one by one—prop their personal copies of *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail ’72*, *Songs of the Doomed*, et al., against a tree and then blasted bullet holes through the text.”

Hard-core Thompson fans may be disappointed to learn that their hero’s basement office is no more. An exact replica of the infamous “War Room” (featuring a taxidermied bat, IV bags on a pole and a Richard Nixon mask) appeared in *Where the Buffalo Roam*, the 1980 film in which Bill Murray played the “legendary outlaw journalist” (as he’s touted in the movie’s trailer). When back and hip ailments made climbing the stairs too painful, the kitchen and living room became Thompson’s writing salons.

All of which means Dr. Gonzo’s acolytes will soon be allowed to sit in his final writing room and bask in his spritual presence, between high-octane spoonfuls of his favorite Jell-O. **N**



RACISM REDUX

Baltimore in 2015 looks like Yonkers in 1988—which makes HBO's *Show Me a Hero* timely and depressing

IN THE LATE 1980S, Yonkers was in chaos. After decades of using public housing to illegally segregate its minorities, the city—just north of the Bronx in New York—faced judgment from a federal court. Yet after the order to desegregate came down, Yonkers refused to let go of the past. Politicians whipped up outrage among residents, and council meetings were mobbed with hordes, furious that minorities would no longer be sequestered and screaming insults and disrupting the proceedings. Those politicians willing to accept the court's decision were harassed and received death threats. Meanwhile, the federal judge overseeing the case was issuing fines hefty enough to bankrupt Yonkers if it did not comply.

This real-life turmoil is the subject of David Simon's new six-hour miniseries for HBO, *Show Me a Hero*. Directed by Paul Haggis, *Hero* stars Oscar Isaac as Nick Wasicsko, an ambitious, young politician caught in the maelstrom, plus Catherine Keener, LaTanya Richardson Jackson, Winona Ryder, Bob Balaban and Peter Riegert. Simon initially took on *Hero*—based on a 1999 book by Lisa Belkin—back in 2001, just as he was starting *The Wire*. He subsequently shelved it for one time-sensitive project (*Generation Kill*, about the Iraq War) and then another (*Treme*, about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina)—but despite its long gestation, *Show Me a Hero* resonates uncomfortably in 2015, as it explores the political gamesmanship and struggles behind

America's racial and economic woes. "I somehow had a clue that the American problems of race and class were not going to go away," Simon says wryly. Surveying a current landscape filled with paranoia-fueled debates over health care and immigration, plus Tea Party hostility and the racial strife in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore that captured headlines during filming, Simon sees many connections back to Yonkers. "There's the permanence of the racial component with this overlay of 'I should just be left alone to make my money and do what I want, and I don't have any responsibility to the health of the greater society.'"

The Yonkers saga began as a fight over school segregation, but the schools were segregated because the city spent decades using federal money to isolate minorities. Almost the entire black population had been shoved into housing within 1 square mile, in a city more than twenty times that size. The Justice Department, along with the NAACP, sued Yonkers in 1980. Their win in 1985 meant Yonkers had to create desegregated public housing within the city's white communities. White residents were infuriated, yet insisted it wasn't about *race* but about the *culture* fostered in public housing. Recalcitrant officials stalled...and stalled...and stalled some more. As the miniseries begins, local politicians who want to preserve the status quo are pushing for an appeal to the Supreme Court, even though

BY
STUART MILLER



HATEFUL '80S:
Two residents at a
1988 city council
meeting argue over
a federal ruling
that forced the
city of Yonkers to
desegregate its
public housing—the
backdrop for
HBO's new series,
Show Me a Hero.

their lawyers have told them they will lose.

NAACP lawyer Michael Sussman (played by Jon Bernthal) was involved in the segregation case from 1980 until it finally wound down in 2007. He tells *Newsweek* that no matter what Yonkers residents claimed, “this case is about Northern racism—what it looks like and continues to look like.” But Angelo Martinelli, the incumbent mayor in 1987, tells *Newsweek* it was about politicians like Hank Spallone (played by Alfred Molina) “whipping up a mob because it was the easy and popular thing to do, instead of looking at a problem to find solutions.” Martinelli (portrayed by Jim Belushi) was defeated by Wasicsko in the following election, largely because Wasicsko exploited Martinelli’s refusal to support the

“I SOMEHOW HAD A CLUE THAT AMERICA’S PROBLEMS OF RACE AND CLASS WERE NOT GOING TO GO AWAY.”

endless appeals. Later, though, Wasicsko changed sides, even standing up to Spallone and other bullying extremist politicians.

But *Show Me a Hero* looks beyond the political battle to show how the tumult affected the



citizens of Yonkers. “I see a number of heroes,” author Belkin tells *Newsweek*, pointing to people who moved from the projects into hostile areas, despite knowing that their new neighbors had fought vociferously to keep them out. She also holds up a woman named Mary Dorman (played by Keener), who adamantly protested the desegregation plan at first. When Dorman saw how hateful her side had become, she reversed course and worked to build a sense of community with the newcomers in her neighborhood. Belkin says Dorman initially complained when she read about herself, until she was shown the notes from Belkin’s research and her interviews. “She said possibly the bravest thing you could say,” Belkin recalls. “‘You are right—I didn’t recognize the person I used to be, and I didn’t like her very much.’” Simon says he loves how some of the heroes are “quiet bureaucrats.” Oscar Newman (played by Riepert) designed 200 units in townhouses—rather than impersonal high-rises—to make public housing residents feel invested in the community and encourage people to see the homes as a legitimate part of the neighborhood. (Simon adds that 200 units had a minimal impact on desegregating a city of 200,000—and none of the imagined nightmares came true.)

When Simon first signed on to develop the miniseries, he called an old newspaper colleague, William Zorzi (then a *Baltimore Sun* metro editor), and pestered him until he became a co-writer and executive producer. Zorzi interviewed many of the participants and quickly realized that while the political battle was riveting, the story’s centerpiece “was really the women of Yonkers,” like Dorman and others portrayed on the show. “They are the human faces who show what is at stake,” Zorzi says. Simon and Zorzi knew that telling those stories meant narrowing the political fight to focus just on the city’s refusal to accept the order for public housing, instead of including the equally divisive issue of school desegregation.

“Frankly, it’s a delight to have six hours on HBO to discuss the issues of public housing and

hyper-segregation,” says Simon, who adds that he didn’t want to be too preachy or “stack the deck in a polemical way.” As a result, many of the show’s most wrenching speeches are taken directly from the historical record.

It’s a history that remains frighteningly relevant. “It’s deeply depressing that I’ve spent my whole life working on these issues, yet this miniseries is so necessary and feels so current,” says Sussman. So current, in fact, that after what happened in Ferguson and Baltimore, the Obama administration took a cue from Yonkers and announced a plan to require cities to use federal housing funds to reduce segregation, as well as a new voucher program to help people leave

“THIS CASE IS ABOUT NORTHERN RACISM—WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE AND CONTINUES TO LOOK LIKE.”

public housing for better neighborhoods. Simon sees the fear-mongering in the Yonkers council as a perfect metaphor for the current U.S. Congress. “A lot of the writing about our political system—I’m looking at you, Mr. Sorkin—is aspirational,” he says, referring to Aaron Sorkin, director and creator of the political drama *The West Wing*. “Sorkin’s got remarkable chops, but his political universe is *Father Knows Best*. I think it’s almost a subversive act to say, ‘Here’s politics. No, come closer, smell.’” ■

HOLLOW MAN: Oscar Isaac, right, plays Nick Wasicko, a Yonkers city councilman who exploited Mayor Angelo Martinelli’s support of the desegregation bill to launch his own mayoral campaign in 1987.



PAUL SCHIRALDI/HBO

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING MANGLEHORN

Al Pacino convincingly plays a curmudgeon, to the surprise of no one

THE PATIENT is not doing well. Miss Fanny, visibly in pain, has become totally lethargic. After running several tests, the doctors find an obstruction in her intestines: "We need to do a laparotomy immediately," they say. Alarmed by this diagnosis, her custodian, one A.J. Manglehorn (Al Pacino), asks what Miss Fanny's chance of survival will be. "She's a good anesthetic risk, so we're looking at about 95 percent," they reply. Marginally reassured, Manglehorn hands over his cat. The surgeons then duly extract a little key the animal had swallowed from Miss Fanny's gut.

Curiously, the man who is so badly shaken by his pet's ailment is somewhat less perturbed when his son Jacob (Chris Messina) encounters a misfortune. At one point in David Gordon Green's film *Manglehorn*, Jacob shows up distraught, begging his father for help. Instead of assisting him, Manglehorn coldly asks, "Where did I go wrong with you? You've turned into a shark and a liar." While this hostility is to some degree understandable (Jacob is a liar), some of Manglehorn's

other judgment calls are not. A long-established misanthrope, he believes humanity as a whole has wronged him. Even the kindly bank clerk Dawn (Holly Hunter) who has had the ill luck to fall in love with the cantankerous locksmith, is rudely brushed off. Another friend, the wheeler-dealer Gary (played with gleeful angst by indie filmmaker Harmony Korine), gets a beating for trying to cheer up Manglehorn by buying him a prostitute.

As the story of this small-town locksmith unfurls, we learn that Manglehorn's bitterness comes from being jilted by Clara, the woman he loved. He composes rambling letters to his ex that all come back unopened. Manglehorn's misery soon reaches

pathological proportions, as he appears to suffer from what psychologists have dubbed "complex grieving syndrome"—a vicious cycle that the afflicted are neither willing nor able to break. Unfortunately, no note or novel will bring Clara back.

It's classic sad-sack stuff, and his turn from pitiful basket case to tolerable human being is predictable. The film grinds on for almost 80 minutes before Manglehorn finally works out that *he* is the source of his woes. Visual quirks, layered audio tracks and double exposures that appear lifted straight from Korine's more visceral films, do little to spice up *Manglehorn*. The ambient soundtrack, courtesy of composer David Wingo, leaves too

little of the characters' emotions to the viewer's imagination.

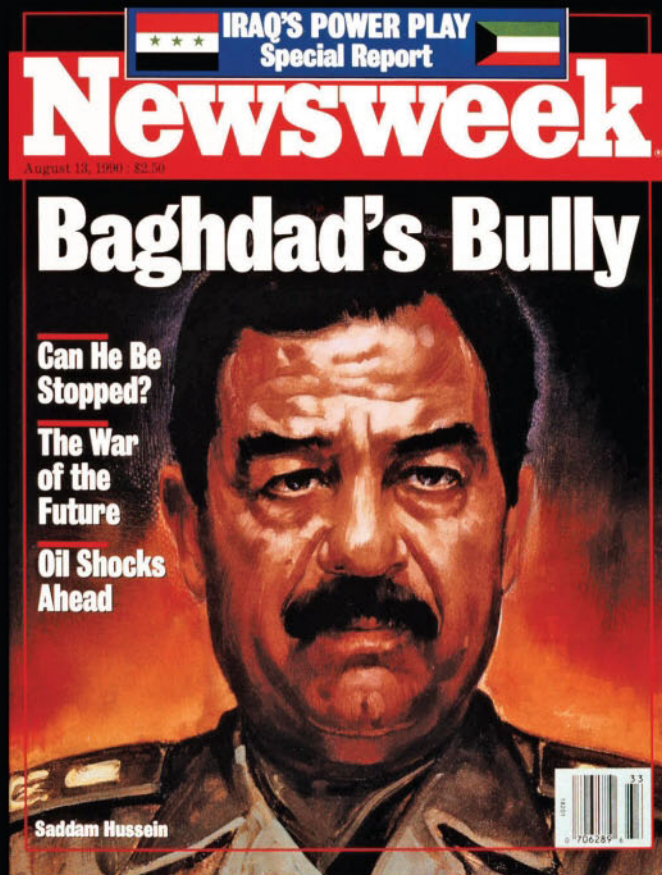
At the same time, *Manglehorn* is commendable, thanks to a performance from Al Pacino that oscillates between tempered melancholy and towering spikes of spite, and Hunter complements him beautifully. Dawn has experienced her own loss but is mellow and more stable.

Naturally, he's too blinkered to realize that this woman is his ideal foil. But the film sparkles only when Dawn and Manglehorn wrestle to find some middle ground. Unfortunately, that means that the rest of the scenes tread listlessly on and may make some viewers question why Green didn't just hand off the camera to Korine. **D**



REWIND

25
YEARS



AUGUST 1, 1990

MASSACHUSETTS GUBERNATORIAL
CANDIDATE JOHN SILBER, IN A ROUNDUP
OF QUOTES CALLED "PERSPECTIVES"

“Maine is
a good
location
for a
nuclear
power plant—where
the damn thing could
have an accident and
not hurt anybody.”



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